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THE UK'S **NUMBER ONE** BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

Bass Guitar Magazine

FRANKFURT MUSIKMESSE REPORT

LES CLAYPOOL

TINA WEYMOUTH

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NICKY WIRE

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

'ROCK MUSIC IS ABSOLUTELY EMPTY!'

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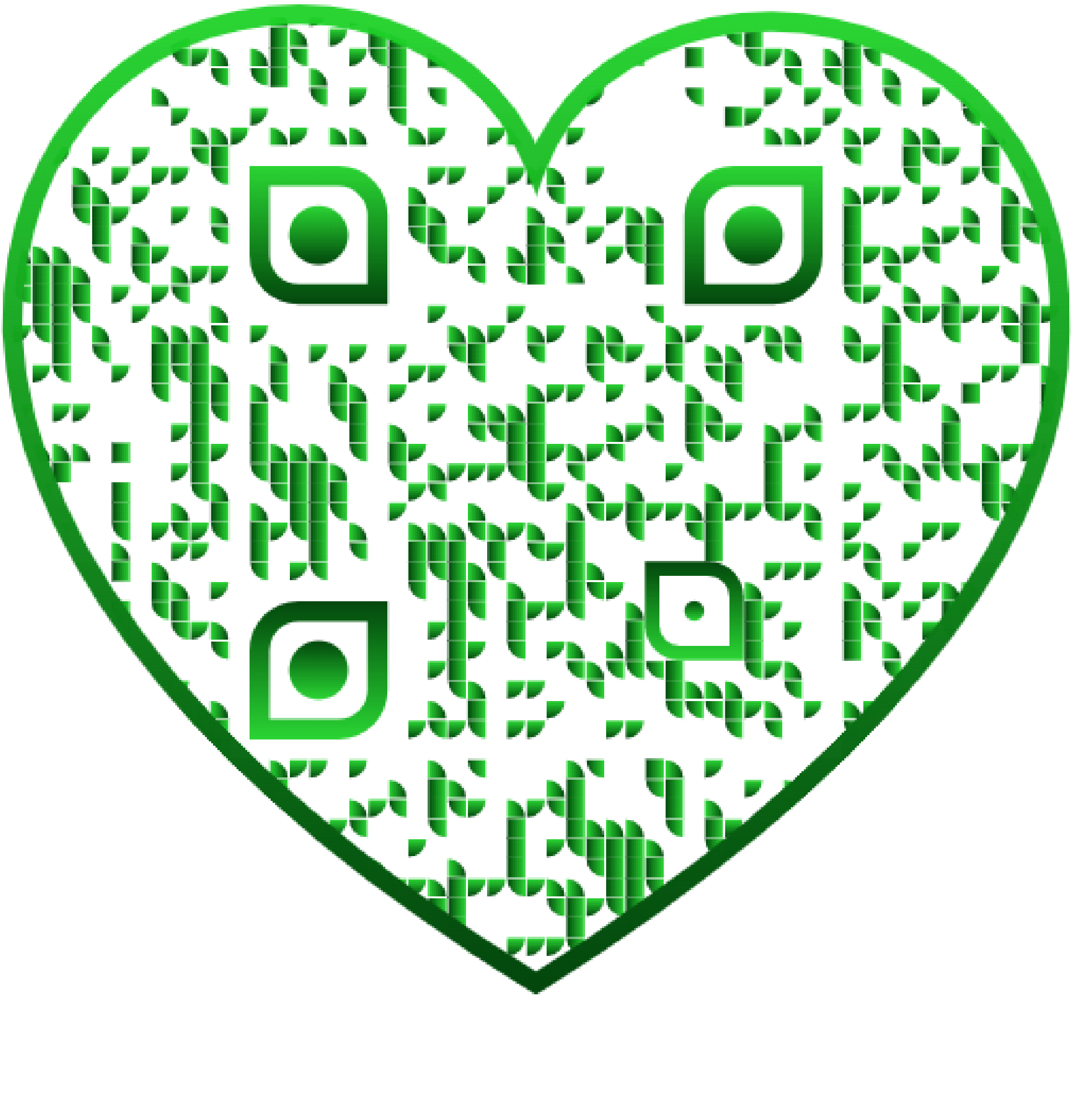

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As the only UK magazine devoted to bass, we're in the fortunate position here at *BGM's* secret command bunker to have access to the great and the good of the bass guitar world – but even by our standards, this month's issue has some mighty personalities tucked between its pages. How about Nicky Wire for starters? Always the most confrontational of the Manic Street Preachers, ready with a soundbite or a mean bass part at a moment's notice, the man that literally no one calls Nick Jones is one of Britain's most thought-provoking bass players. In our cover interview, the great man sounds off about the death of rock and the beauty of the bass: head to it without a moment's delay.

We're also delighted to present our full and frank meeting with the equally great Tina Weymouth, sometime of Talking Heads and now of Tom Tom Club. With a career heading back as far as the 70s that never strayed very far from the cutting edge of cool, Tina is a true icon for all of us. Then there's Les Claypool, perhaps the most advanced bassist of his generation, plus Stick inventor Emmett Chapman (interviewed by none other than Nick Beggs, himself a Stick player of mammoth skill) and our first-hand report of the recent Frankfurt Musikmesse. All of bass life is here, and together with gear reviews for all budgets and tuition columns for all abilities, you have no excuse not to dive straight in. See you in June!

Joel McIver, editor

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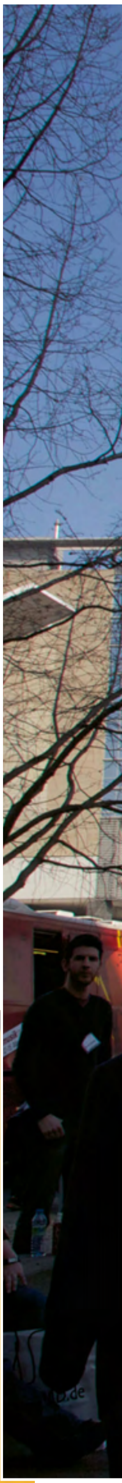

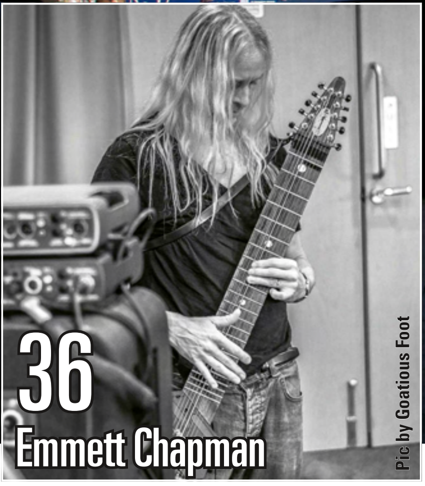

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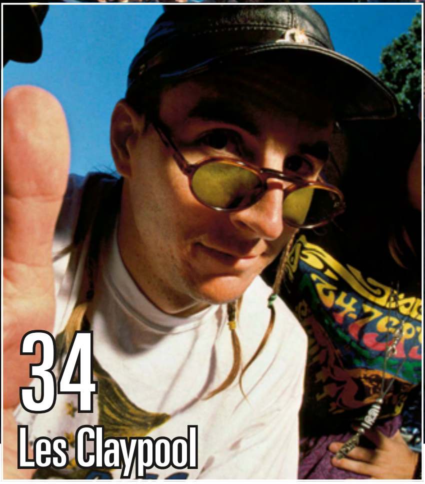

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THE LOW DOWN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BASS WORLD, BROUGHT TO YOU BY BGM'S TEAM OF FEARLESS NEWSHOUNDS

'KING AMAZING

You couldn't make this one up. *Destination Earth*, a novel by children's author Ali Sparkes, has as its hero Mark King of Level 42. Sparkes, a *Blue Peter* Book Of The Year Award winner no less, has our fast-thumbed man battling an alien race called the Koth in his manor of the Isle Of Wight, which the impudent beastie has chosen as the starting point for its invasion of Earth. Says the author, "The inspiration was my teenage son, who is very interested in music and learning to play bass guitar. As a result, he is a massive Level 42 fan and Mark King is, without a doubt, the God of Bass. He and the band are hugely respected in the music industry and by music lovers of all ages for their technical music-making talent. I went with my son to see Level 42 in concert and it was absolutely jam-packed – full of young music fans just loving the music – and it was from that experience that the idea to involve the band in *Destination Earth* grew."

"Luckily Mark and the band have been really supportive," she adds. "This is all a bit bonkers… but they seem to love it!" King himself says of the book, in which he fends off aliens with a barrage of plucked notes, "I was astonished, actually. Very flattered too, but astonished. Once I'd had the full brief on *Destination Earth* I fell in love with the idea of being the hero in a children's book – how cool! And it's a great book, I was gripped throughout and, as Ali says, I like to think that our music has the same relevance as when we began 35 years ago. We're still a group of friends who really love playing together, and maybe this book will open a few young eyes, as to what a good noise you can make when you do."

RUMBLINGS

Fender have announced a new range of Rumble amps, featuring Eminence drivers and premium HF compression tweeters. The new amps – five combos, two cabs and two heads – range from 15 to 500 watts and feature 8", 10", 12" and 15" speakers. Ceramic magnet speakers, compression tweeter options and a focus on lightweight designs mean that the Rumble range should be a highly useable addition to any bassist's armoury, although rest assured we'll be running them through *BGM's* stringent testing protocol as soon as possible to confirm. Without even seeing them, though, we know we like the £109 to £499 price range. Watch this space. Info as always: **www.fender.com.**

KOOL AID

After a year off, Surrey's premier rock event Guilfest is back, and while normally we wouldn't bother to point this out because there are apparently over five million similar festivals every year in this country, we feel duty bound to mention this one because of its bassist-friendly line-up. To be held on 18 to 20 July in Stoke Park, Guildford, the event features Kool & The Gang, the Boomtown Rats, the Human League and a ton of other acts across several stages. There's also comedy, acoustic, theatre, a VIP area for people who like nice clean toilets, a kids' art zone and plenty of beer. What's not to like?
Info: www.guilfest.co.uk.

DIRECT LINES

The splendid Mark Stickley and his team at Bass Direct has informed us of a remarkable new range of gear which anyone headed towards the Midlands should really check out. On Mark's walls you'll find basses by Skjold, Vigier (among which has recently been Roger Glover's signature model, signed by the man himself at the recent London Bass Guitar Show), Roscoe, Mike Lull, Brubaker, Elrick, Dingwall, Godin, Overwater, Tanglewood and Sandberg. He also has some of the rather nifty Phil Jones Bass PJB headphones that we saw at NAMM.
Info: www.bassdirect.co.uk.

GEAR HERE

Twyford-based bass base (eh?) Bass Gear has announced two new amplification ranges from California, offering lots of valve goodness. The ultra-cool Monique Dove Cage from Jule Amp is already generating a lot of interest from high-end UK session players and there's an 800w Minnie power amp, designed by legendary builder James Demeter, to sit perfectly under the Monique. Jule also offers rackmount Moniques that can be supplied as standalone pre-amps or with the Minnie installed internally. James Demeter has also just released his take on a valve head: the VTBP-M-800D, based on the original preamp he built back in 1982 and used for many years by veteran player Lee Sklar, paired with the Minnie 800w amp.
Info: www.bassgear.co.uk.

Triumvirate

We select three essential albums from a genre or player.
THIS MONTH: John Deacon

1 THE GAME BY QUEEN

Look, any self-respecting rock fan needs this album, a near perfect blend of rock chops and pop sensibilities, and any bass player should own it for the simple fact that it contains one of the most famous and groove-heavy bass riffs ever: 'Another One Bites The Dust'. That's that covered, and there's no more discussion. But the awesome walking line on 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love' and the greasy riffing on 'Dragon Attack' are also worth the price of admission.

2 A DAY AT THE RACES BY QUEEN

John's combination of taste, groove and chops is pretty much unparalleled. Check out his playing on 'Millionaire Waltz', where he traverses the fretboard, changing note length at will to weave in and out of the guitar and piano.

'Tie Your Mother Down' is one of the band's best straight-up rockers and Deacon's galloping bass is the perfect bedrock. And of course his playing on 'Somebody To Love' could have come straight from the hands of 'Duck' Dunn.

3 THE WORKS BY QUEEN

How many bands these days manage to create 11 albums? And even if they manage to get anywhere near that number, how many keep it as fresh and vital as this 1984 effort, which charted in the UK at number two?

Deacon is up to his usual tricks here, with wonderful melodic lines on 'Radio Ga Ga', while the pounding rock bass on 'Hammer To Fall' is a great example of his use of the upper registers to contrast dynamics.

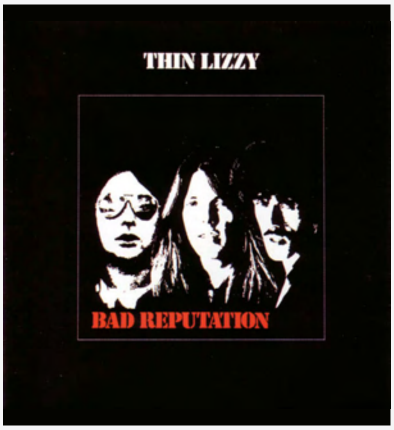
Revolver

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH:
'Dancing In The Moonlight'

Bassist: *Phil Lynott*
Album: *Bad Reputation by Thin Lizzy*

Phil Lynott was the consummate rock bassist: always holding the band together, driving things along and just occasionally reminding everyone that there's more to rock bass than root notes and unison riffing. The standout single from one of the band's best albums shows just what a great bassist Phil was. Its slinky, swinging riff is instantly recognisable, memorable and hummable: all the qualities you want in a bass hook. And we love the way he lays down some walking lines in the outro. The man had groove as well as badass attitude by the bucketful.

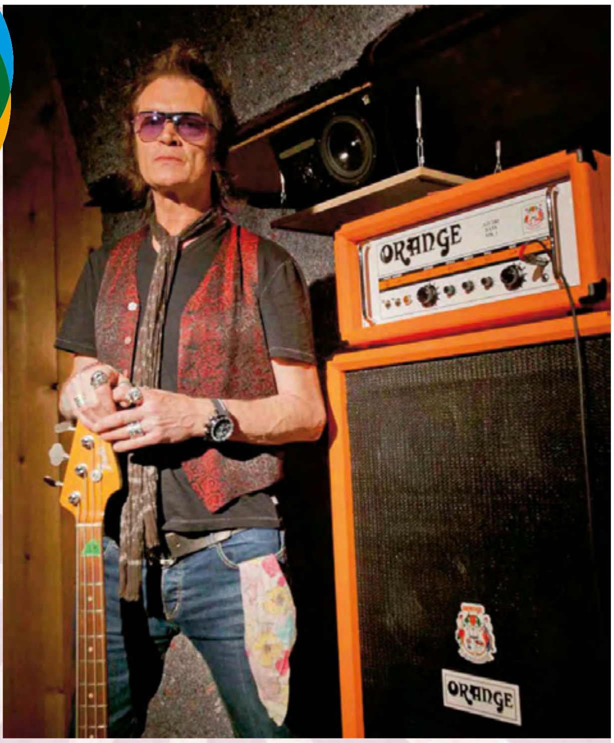


SMOOTH MOVES

While recaffeinating and perusing *BGM's* social media the other day, we came across some seriously eyecatching bass guitar designs from South African luthier Murray Kuun. We like to grab a mini-interview with bass-related people whenever we can, so we reached out to Murray and asked what the score was. His words are as follows: "I am a music-loving furniture-designer-turned-violin-maker about 15 to 20 years ago. I am a designer by nature and making violin after violin bored me, so I started making classical guitars, then steel-string and electric guitars. I have discovered, though, that bass players are the most open-minded of all and are receptive to very modern interpretations of the basic instrument." He's right, we rule. Murray continues: "To date, I have designed and hand-built just two models and I have quite a few other bass designs in the pipeline. I build mainly to custom order. The best place to see all my instruments together is at www.pinterest.com/murraykuun/murray-kuun-design-lutherie and of course my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/MurrayKuunGuitarDesign."

Asked if we could review one of his basses, Murray told us that the nearest one is in Japan. Any readers out there want to track it down?

WIN!



Sometime Deep Purple and Black Country Communion bassist Glenn Hughes was over in the UK recently, doing press for his ace new band California Breed, and we got him to sign a promo CD to give away here. Snap it up by answering this brain-teaser.

In the 80s, Glenneth formed a popular hard rock duo with:

A Pat Cash

B Pat Thrall

C Pat Butcher

Head to www.bassguitarmagazine.com/competition to enter. Closing date: 17 June.

Philip Miles takes home a Mooer Thunderball Distortion pedal. Thanks to all who entered.

WON!

FREEK OUT!

BGM reader Gaz Buttery writes to us as follows. "Hi all at *Bass Guitar Magazine*, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the London Bass Guitar Show. I've been to all the shows but this year you guys excelled yourselves! Not only did I get to test drive some great gear, but on top of that I got to meet the amazing Freekbass! I even managed to get on stage for a picture with TM Stevens and Lee Sklar at the same time. I also met the great John East. I have at home my first ever bass, a budget model Aria Pro II, which was just gathering dust since I purchased my USA Fender Jazz, a previous show purchase. But thanks to a new John East preamp, this bass has gone from David Banner to the Hulk soundwise! John invited me to his house to have the preamp fitted and a nicer guy you will not meet. So thanks again and keep delivering a great mag and show!" Job done, we reckon...

EVERY MONTH MASTER AXE RESTORER SIMON MCVEIGH WORKS ON BRINGING A KNACKERED OLD STATUS BACK TO LIFE. MONTH THREE: A NEW BRIDGE, SCRATCHGUARD AND CONTROLS FOR THE BEAST

Simon McVeigh has been a session bassist for over 20 years, and works as a bass tutor at the Royal County School of Music in County Meath, Ireland. He has recorded with many artists and runs www.breadheadmusic.com, a contacts resource for professionals in the music industry.

Well, Mr Matty Dread has come up trumps for me again. Once again, he has turned my designs and dodgy sketches into a reality that has far surpassed my expectations.

First, and most exciting for me, is the bridge. I based the design on the same footprint as the old one and placed the screw holes in the same positions, so I won't have to drill any new holes into the body. There are a few modifications that differ from the original bridge: I made the saddles nice and chunky, as well as the bridge itself. As it's made from aluminium, it is extremely light and will also resonate well.

I got the scratchguard and control knobs made from the same material to give all the hardware a uniformity that will give a nice, fresh look to the bass. The scratchguard has been redesigned into a much smaller shape, so it covers the internal workings of the bass without hiding any of the lovely alder wood of the body. Thanks to the precision engineering from Matty, everything fits very snugly. The new additions instantly transform this neglected bedroom bass back into the professional working instrument that it once was, and one that I wouldn't be embarrassed about taking out on a gig.

Looking at the inside, the electronics of the bass are all clean and working correctly, but the battery compartment has seen better days. For some reason the wires have been disconnected from it, so the bass has been running in passive mode. I'll pop in a new battery compartment and reconnect it so that I have the choice between active or passive playing. There is a mini toggle switch on the front of the bass that flips between active and passive – or rather, what Status call 'true passive', which sounds really nice and woody.

I started playing bass in the mid-80s; my first few basses were all cheap, passive Fender copies that I played through dodgy low-powered amps. Playing with this type of gear, it was necessary for my fingerstyle to become very strong. My technique can be a bit overpowering for more sensitive active pickups, which is one reason why I prefer a passive bass, along with the tone and warmth that comes from passive instruments. However, it's all subjective and it depends on what works for you!

Next month I will be tackling the frets. Until then, stay in touch and email me with any questions at simonmcveigh@eircom.net.

Costs this month: £90 for the bridge, scratchguard and control knobs.
Total costs so far: £345
Info: simonmcveigh@eircom.net

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THE BASS SCHOLARSHIP

This month Rares takes a look at superimposition of pentatonics. Have at it!

I've just started my last term on the course, and I have to say I'm pretty excited about it, having had a look through the course materials and seeing what's coming up. The stuff we're doing keeps getting trickier each lesson, but challenges are the ones that keep things fun.

This month we are continuing our journey exploring the pentatonic scale with a slightly more advanced concept: superimposing major pentatonics over a major chord. The idea of superimposing is fairly simple: say you have a vamp with a C major chord and you want to play a pentatonic scale over it, instead of playing a major pentatonic off the tonic (or root note), you can play the same pentatonic shape, but starting off other degrees of the scale. For example, instead of playing a C major pentatonic, try playing a major pentatonic off the 4th (F) or 5th (G) of the scale.

Let's analyse the notes in these scales and see how they work in relation to the C major scale. Starting off with the F major pentatonic, the notes in the scale would be F, which is the 4th (or 11th) of C major; G, which is the 5th; A, the 6th (or 13th); C, the 1st; and D, the 2nd (or 9th). As for the G major pentatonic, the notes would be G (5th); A (6th or 13th); B (7th); D (2nd or 9th) and E (3rd). Because it doesn't contain the root of the chord, playing a pentatonic off the 5th of a scale allows us to think more freely. As bassists, we often find ourselves playing the root too much when improvising, so this scale is a good way to avoid that. However, you can always alternate between scales so you can get back to the root as well.

Once you get this idea down, superimposing can be loads of fun! The examples I gave you are the most 'in' sounding ones, because all of the notes are diatonic (contained in the C major scale). When you play major pentatonics off other degrees of the scale, the intervals created will be non-diatonic as well. Try analysing them as we did in the examples above, and then see how they sound when applied. You will find some really interesting flavors (such as D major pentatonic over C), which, in combination with the root position pentatonic, can help create tension and release in your improvisations.

I have uploaded a video of me applying this concept on my YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/raresbass) so make sure you check it out. Until next time, stay on the low frequency!

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

BASSISTS REVEAL THE TRICKS OF THEIR TRADE FASTER THAN A SNAPPING D STRING

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BASSES SCHECTER OMEN EXTREME
EFFECTS SANSAMP TECH 21
AMPS AMPEG SVT 4 PRO WITH 8X10 CAB

COREY HENDERSON ANTI-MORTEM

My style comes from a lot of different aspects of bass playing. I try to consider everything. It is constantly being moulded depending on the song or sound I'm trying to achieve. I don't think at any time it's been exactly the same. I love the idea of the band sounding like one big instrument as far as the 'strings' go. I like to underline the guitars with a big, heavy, dirty sound. I use some mids, but I let the guitarist cover most of it. I've never been a competitive player. I find the beauty in simplicity. I think the secret to bass playing 'well' is practice and being yourself. No sound is better than the other, because they are all expressions of the player. Most of all, playing in the pocket is a great thing for the rhythm section, no matter your style of playing. My bass heroes would have to be John Campbell from Lamb of God, Rex Brown from Pantera, Rek Mhor from Hurt, and of course the legendary Cliff Burton from Metallica – may his soul rest in peace. To me there was never a bass player that I thought was the 'best'. They are all artists and each one brings something different and unique. Our new album New Southern comes out on April 28, and we will playing the Download Festival in the UK in June. We can't wait!
www.anti-mortem.com

GEAR
BASSES SCHECTER OMEN EXTREME
EFFECTS SANSAMP TECH 21
AMPS AMPEG SVT 4 PRO WITH 8X10 CAB

BILL CLEMENTS

Lately I've refined my style in terms of tone, making sure each note has more presence and hangs out in the room better, tweaking my gear to see what effects I can get by using different speaker cabinet configurations. I'm still playing four-string basses exclusively, though I've played five and six in the past. This is another 'less is more' situation. I think more resourcefully with fewer options. My style is very percussive: slapping without actually slapping. The fact that I can get that tone out of a passive-electronics style bass is something I've always prided myself on. My first bass was a Sears bass that somebody took and put another sticker on. My favourite bass to date is the Bill Clements Signature model from Regenerate Guitar Works in Seattle. The name's not going on the front of the headstock; people don't need to promote me every time they pull the bass out. It'll be on the back – they'll know it's there. My bass heroes are the same as they are for everybody. You seek out the great ones, even if they're not famous. If I happen to sound like Jaco, or anyone else, especially after the accident in which I lost my hand, it's purely coincidental. If you play a Strat, with a certain kind of sound, you're going to sound like Jimi Hendrix or Stevie Ray Vaughan. The best recorded bass tone ever? Well, none of the albums I consider qualifying were recorded by somebody playing with one hand. All of those great albums were recorded by somebody with two hands and I'm not magically able to execute that. The best tone I'm achieving currently is the realistic one. My situation is totally unique in that regard. Right now I'm working with Regenerate Guitar Works developing the Bill Clements Signature model for production. I also work as a… 'teacher'. I hesitate to use the word, but someone who might enable people who are amputees, stroke victims or veterans who have combat-related injuries to play. Maybe they played before, and think they're not able to. I've got a couple of recording projects in the works with a variety of different line-ups (I'm most excited about what hopes to be a double-CD with a DVD). I also have a prog-trio called the Bill Clements Axiom, one of the few times I've leaned into a genre-specific style. Also, I'm doing more live dates in Detroit and Colorado this summer.
Youtube/Facebook: search for Bill Clements

TOMAS SPERRING AMBER RUN

My bass style is far from complicated, although I do love a good passing note or six. It might sound clichéd, but it's just whatever fits into the mood of the song: it's never really there to stand out. Circus freakshow crossed with debonair panache. My first bass was a 50s reissue Mexican Precision that my dad bought me. It's still my go-to bass. Our manager and good friend had an 80s Musicman Stingray in his loft and has just donated it to my cause. It's virtually scrap, but I love it. It's my favourite bass – that and any 60s Mustang. I have a soft spot for short scale. My bass hero is Daniel Tichenor from Cage The Elephant. He's so tall! The greatest bass player that ever lived is Jonathan Morley. He played bass in a band called Chicane in the late 80s and early 90s. He wore shorts on stage once. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose either *Room On Fire* by the Strokes or Cage The Elephant's eponymous debut album. We've literally just stepped out of the studio recording our debut album. It's being mixed and mastered as we speak. Just polished off our next single 'Spark', which should be out as you read this.
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BASSES FENDER PRECISION, FENDER JAGUAR, WESTONE THUNDER 1A
EFFECTS BOSS ODB 3 OVERDRIVE, LINE 6 VERBZILLA REVERB

I'm self-taught, so I take inspiration from a bunch of bands I like, which covers a pretty varied range. Fanfarlo don't really conform to any genre: each member is given free range to play their instruments in the style they're digging at the time and try to make it work. At this stage, I think most of us are quite inspired by 70s techniques of recording and playing. I don't play five- or six-string bass, because I've never felt restricted by the usual four strings. I bought a fretless a while back that I'm trying to get to grips with, and could maybe be applied in the future if great care is taken. I do attempt some slap, but mainly as a warm-up or for fun or on my own. On some of my own music I have incorporated some tasteful slap, but it's quite hard to make it work in Fanfarlo. Not every member in the band is totally down with it. Our tastes are all so different. I'll slap and hear Stevie Wonder, but someone else will hear the *Seinfeld* theme and hate it. It's dangerous ground. The bass that I use most now is a Fender Precision. I've had a bunch of people look at it and tell me when it's from, but no one can pin it down. The most confident assessment is that it's either a build your-own-at-home-kit Precision or a Frankenstein guitar cobbled together from old parts including a Fender neck. Either way I adore it. It's a cosmetic disaster, which I like, and the tone could be slightly better, but I love its playability. We have grown on one another over the years. Our third LP *Let's Go Extinct* is out now.
www.fanfarlo.com

TIM HUTTON

I'm about to get my first ever five-string. I find it's useful in the studio for getting the low notes – although I've resisted up till now as four-string is what I'm used to. I don't slap: I never learned how as I didn't think it was very cool. However, sometimes I see it being done and applied properly and I wish I were better at it. The secret of playing bass well? I'm still searching for it, but I'd say knowing when to hold it down, and when to stretch out. My first bass was a second-hand Kay bass (the brand you'd get in Woolies) that my grandma bought me for 15 quid in 1977. My favourite bass to date was a Gibson Les Paul, one of the last ever made and sadly lost in a studio robbery. I'm touring with Dub Pistols, writing with Liam Howlett and producing for a host of others. I'm also a brand ambassador for the specialist insurance provider Musicguard, as well as working with them to offer guidance on the cover that musicians really need based on my own experience.
www.timhutton.co.uk, www.musicguard.co.uk

GEAR
BASSES WARWICK STREAMER
EFFECTS BOSS GT-10B
AMPS WARWICK LWA-1000 WITH 115 AND 408 CABS

RYAN WOMBACHER DEVIL YOU KNOW

GEAR
BASSES IBANEZ ATK AND SOUNDGEAR
EFFECTS SANSAMP
AMPS CLASSIC TUBE HEADS, AMPEG 8X10 CABS

I tend to play what the guitar is playing, but there are times where I step back and play the rhythm and play the basic root notes. Devil You Know is tuned to A, so playing a five-string bass gives me a good setup and action with great string tension while being tuned low. I love to play a lot of slap bass and tapping, but I don't carry it over into the type of music we play that often. The secret of playing bass well in my opinion is not overplaying a song. Sometimes the strongest riffs are the simplest ones. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Geddy Lee. I know that question was probably geared towards someone not living anymore but Geddy is still alive – he can't die, that's how good he is. If I could get the bass tone of any album released, I would choose Tool's *10,000 Days*. If you're looking to be famous and get girls, you chose the wrong instrument. Just be happy being a bass player and own it. There is a lack of really solid bass players out there, so there is always a job opportunity for you. Devil You Know will be on tour with Black Label Society until 7 June. Our debut album *The Beauty Of Destruction* comes out in the UK on 28 April, so keep an eye out. ***www.facebook.com/DevilYouKnowOfficial***

TONY CASTAÑEDA, KYNG

I do not play a five-string bass but I have in the past. Having been heavily influenced by classic rock, the four-string is naturally what appealed to me most. When learning to play, it was important for me to emulate my heroes, so I had to use a four-string. It was all I knew, until I got a call to fill in on bass for a band where the music was played on a five-string bass. I learned to play the music, but it never felt organic to me. The secret of playing bass well is passion, dedication and perseverance. I think my first basses were a Series 10 and a Fender P. I remember napping at home after a long day and my kid sister literally dragging me off the couch. She was tired of me saying 'I wanna learn how to play bass!' so she took me to meet a friend of hers who was selling them both, along with a 75-watt Yamaha combo for $300. To this day, I credit her for me starting my journey with this instrument. My bass heroes are Geezer Butler, Roger Waters, Steve Harris, Rex Brown, Phil Lynott and Geddy Lee. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. Our new album, *Burn The Serum*, is out now.

www.kyngband.com

© Sonny Guillen

GEAR

BASSES SCHECTER J-BASS AND STARGAZER
EFFECTS DUNLOP M80 BASS DI, DUNLOP CRYBABY BASS WAH AND BASS CHORUS DELUXE, SANSAMP TECH 21 OVERDRIVE
AMPS HARTKE KILO HEAD AND CABS

GEAR

BASSES LANDING
EFFECTS DARKGLASS B3K DISTORTION
AMPS GALLIEN KRUEGER MB500, BAREFACED SUPER 12 CAB.

ANT VARENNE, CHASING DRAGONS

I would describe my bass style as fairly aggressive and fast – I like to make plenty of noise! I don't play five- or six-string bass, because my hands are smaller than a baby's, which, considering I'm 6'1", is not ideal. I slap every now and again but only where it's needed: too much of a good thing, and all that. The secret of playing bass well is practice, although to be fair, I don't practise as much as I probably should. My first bass was a second-hand fretless Yamaha. The problem was, I didn't even realise it was fretless until I got it home... that was a mistake! My favourite bass ever to date is my custom Landing bass guitar. It's beautiful. It's got so many tone dials that I can change it to suit most genres. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose... oh God that's so hard. There are so many albums with badass tones, but I'd probably say Tim Commerford's tone from Rage Against The Machine's self-titled album of 92. It's just so raw and beefy. We are about to release a new EP called Checkmate in June and it's safe to say I've never been so excited! Our new single 'Broken Jaws' will be being released soon with a music video that people can see now on our Youtube channel.

www.youtube.com/chasingdragonsuk

STEREO MIKE, HÉLLENA

I started my musical journey on piano, found success as one of Greece's best-known conscious rappers, and took on the bass guitar when I embarked on producing Héllena's UK debut. With three critically acclaimed solo albums, six VMA nominations and an MTV Europe Favourite Act nomination, I am also the first winner of the MTV Best Greek Act award and the first artist from Greece ever to perform at SXSW. During my performance at last year's South By Southwest, I called on Héllena for her vocal talents and ended up producing an album for her. After we'd formed a band to take the project on the road, I moved from beats and synths to bass as well. Bass Guitar Magazine has been instrumental in helping me take on the bass so quickly for a new professional project. I've been playing for a little over a year now and although I've played music all my life, having a solid foundation is crucial when it comes to learning and finding out about gear on a new instrument. It feels great to discover such a vibrant bass-playing community in the UK. Héllena is about to release her new single 'Dream Big' from her forthcoming album Body and Soul on 19 May, while performing with her new band at live gigs all around the UK. Catch Héllena live at the How The Light Gets In Festival on 30 May.

www.stereo-mike.com

GEAR

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ASK JEFF

JEFF BERLIN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ON BASS-RELATED MATTERS. WHY NOT CONTACT JEFF TODAY?

Hello Jeff! I want to improve my time so that I can have a career as a studio bass player. I know that you don't believe in using metronomes, so how should I practise? I saw your clinic at the London Bass Guitar Show and you changed my life that day. Yours is the clearest message about improving as a player that I have ever heard. What a gentleman you were!
Always, Peter

© Eckie

Peter, thank you for the compliment about my clinic. I wanted people there to think about playing in ways that they haven't done before. This is why it seemed to go down in such a positive way. I asked people at the clinic to name a musician who studied rock or groove, for example, and who acquired a career in either priniciple by studying these things academically. When no one could name well-known players who had learned these things in schools or lessons, I asked the clinic participants to decide if the methods that they have been offered to study with had validity. I might be the only name musician that rejects the validity of any lesson in any school (famous or not), or offered by any teacher (famous or not), if music is not first in those instructions. If I had my way, I would recommend that every non-music-only music lesson be removed from bass education, replaced with music-only classes. By seeing my clinic, you certainly will understand why I say this.

If you have a career as a studio bassist in mind, you should know that time is not the only skill required to have this career. You were at my clinic, and so you should remember my little demonstration using people in the audience to prove to them that they already have good time. Reading music is essential, as well as having a working knowledge of different styles of music. Bass players have a strange belief that time, or groove, is what is required to play. This is only a part of the complete picture of what a great studio player has. You will notice that players that teach groove or playing in time with feeling are mostly self-taught. This is evidence that groove or playing in time isn't learned via lessons or videos, but learned via other methods not found in music education. The simple truth is that anyone in any style that can groove, has acquired this skill through the self-taught experience. If they can do it, then so can you and everyone reading this.

Studio players also have the ability to play in subtle elements of time adjustable even with a click. But generally, this approach doesn't exist in studio playing anymore. Rather, it is a total regard for the quarter note and where to put it. But accompanying this downbeat focus is the need to read music. Most studio work doesn't include teaching players their parts. If bands rehearse before they record, almost all other forms of recording require that a musician sit down in the studio and open the music that is in front of them to record. One misconception is that recording happens instantaneously, or that once you have opened the music, the recording session begins. Actually, musicians get a chance to run through the music before recordings takes place. This is a quick rehearsal and it makes studio recordings much more 'prepared' by giving a few moments for the musicians to read their parts.

Finally, studio musicians have a flavour in their playing, a lilt, a human touch, a tone, a sensation that makes alive the music that is being recorded. If this was not the case, then producers could just use software to imitate live musicians, and actually many do. The need for a human bass player rather than a sampled one exists because of the human elements of feel and tone. These justify to the producer that using real people over samples is a good idea.

To prepare for this career, I recommend that you play as many gigs, with as many different artists, in as many different live playing environments as possible, while also studying only music (jazz is the best choice). Take reading gigs wherever possible. Try different amps, try different strings and pedals, and experience the full rainbow of live music, so that when you slowly enter into studio playing, your ability to provide a service to a producer or artist is guaranteed.

If you have a question that you'd like answered – about bass, please – why not email Jeff Berlin at talkingbassnotes@yahoo.com, or if you prefer you can post your question at www.facebook.com/bassguitarmagazine. Your question and Jeff's answer may appear in the next issue. What are you waiting for?

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THE MU PAGE

WHAT'S IN A NAME, ASKS THE MU?

Choosing the name of your act, band or ensemble is about more than sounding cool. Your name is your number one promotion tool. It must sum up your music: its feel and philosophy. But it can also put you at odds with the law. So where do you start?

HOW TO CHOOSE

Try making a list of attributes that reflect your musical style and personality. An uncommon juxtaposition of words is less likely to have been used – try some free association games or visit www.bandnamemaker.com for a random name generator.

Still struggling? Try writing down a list of adjectives that describe your music, and another of evocative nouns and verbs. You could try writing down interesting words you encounter and pick combinations of two or three until you come up with a winner. Or look at your favourite pop culture references and pay homage to something meaningful to you.

CHECK YOUR NAME

With names, there are practical and legal issues to consider, so it is always good to have a shortlist in case your favourite doesn't work out. Search as thoroughly online and across social media as you can for your shortlisted names. Make sure your favourites aren't currently in use and have not been used before. Consider checking against businesses too, especially in the music industry, to avoid any pitfalls with domain names or promotion later.

MU in-house solicitor David Fenton agrees: "If you don't conduct a thorough search – online, Companies House, the IPO – you may find you've pressed up T-shirts and album covers and lost money if you then have to rethink your name."

It's also important to check your preferred moniker against available domain names, if you want a website. If it isn't in use, you can register your name on bandname.com, an industry standard online band name registry. Online registration costs US$12, and includes automatic free entry into a worldwide band and artist directory, plus other perks.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You can perform under your own name and no one can take that right away from you – no matter how many others share it – provided your use "is in accordance with honest practices in industrial or commercial matters". However, there are ways you can protect yourself. For example, registering a limited company in your band name would prevent anyone else using the same company name. Buying a trademark is another option. If a name is trademarked, then the owner may be able to stop others using it. Although it's the most effective way to protect your band name, registering it as a trademark can be expensive, and will only be effective in the territories in which you register.

"It's up to each band to decide whether they need or can afford to register," says David Fenton. "If the band has been going for a few years and has built up a reputation and following, then they may feel the name is worth protecting so no-one else can steal it."

Remember, MU officials can walk you through the process and pitfalls of either option.

MU members in bands or ensembles who need advice on naming issues, or any other aspect of their career in music, should get in touch with their Regional Office or visit theMU.org.

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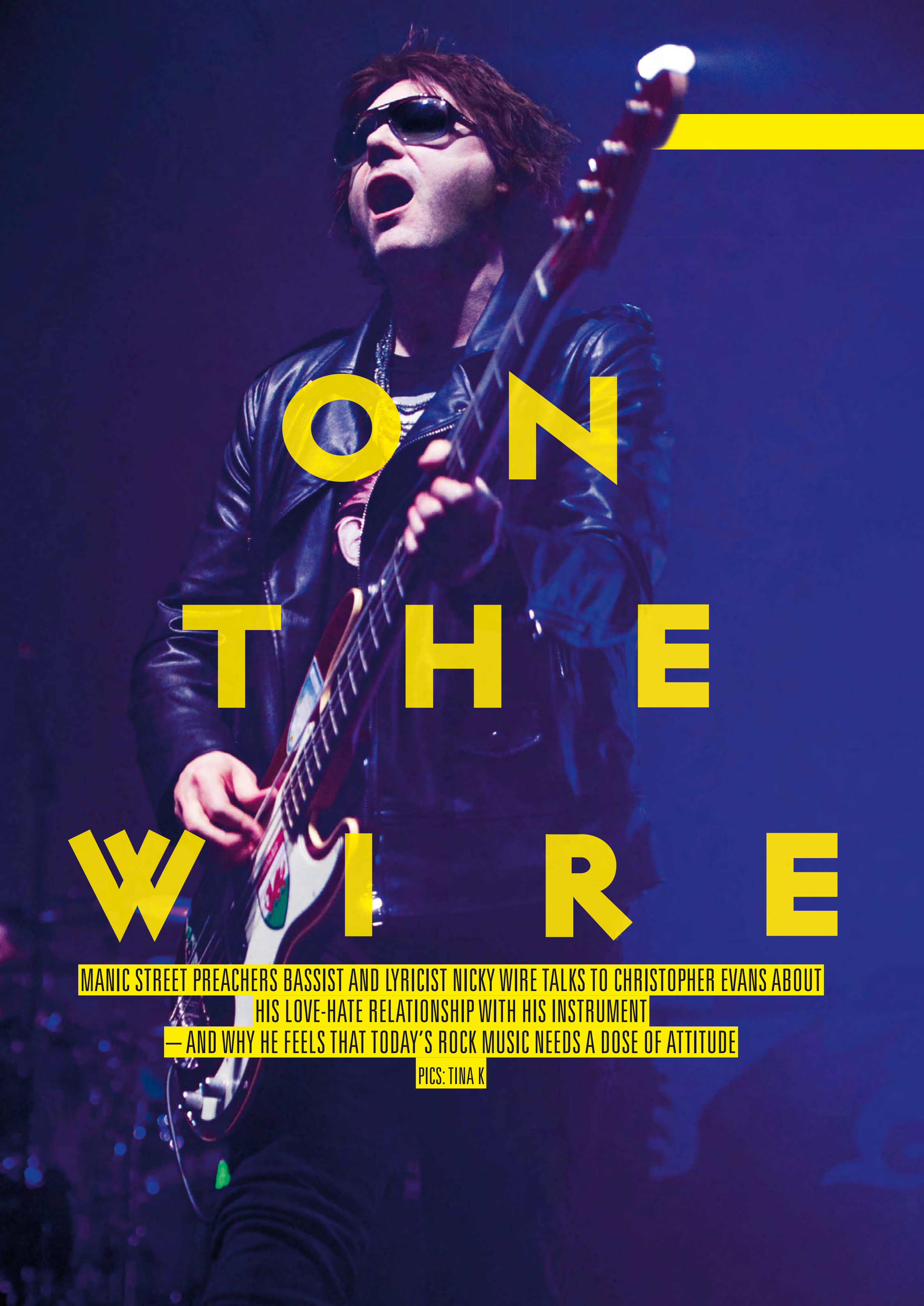


ON THE WIRE

MANIC STREET PREACHERS BASSIST AND LYRICIST NICKY WIRE TALKS TO CHRISTOPHER EVANS ABOUT HIS LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS INSTRUMENT – AND WHY HE FEELS THAT TODAY'S ROCK MUSIC NEEDS A DOSE OF ATTITUDE

PICS: TINA K

You may recall 1991, when the Manic Street Preachers exploded on to the British and international music scene with grandiose claims that they would sell 16 million copies of their debut album *Generation Terrorists* before dismantling in a blaze of beautiful glory. Armed with heavy make-up, political sloganeering and a diatribe against everyone and everything, quoting from Camus and Plath to Monroe and Brando, the punk-inspired band from the Welsh valleys became the darlings of the alternative music press. Led by the band's androgynous and antagonistic spokesmen Nicky Wire and Richey Edwards, the Manics' provocative lyrics quickly gained them a devoted fanbase.

Fastforward to 2014. Thankfully, the Manics haven't fulfilled their self-prophesied implosion and are set to release their twelfth album, *Futurology*. Recorded in Berlin and Cardiff, bassist and lyricist Nicky Wire describes the record as 'post-punk-disco-rock'. Asked about the bass playing on the new album, Wire explains: "It's really Jah Wobble, particularly on the track 'Europa Geht Durch Mich': there is a lot of Jah throughout the album. There are a lot of detuned bass riffs on the album as well. 'Let's Go To War', 'Europa' and 'Walk Me To The Bridge' are all detuned to G – I think! I could be wrong there, James [Dean Bradfield, Manics singer] detunes it for me."

As self-deprecating as ever, Wire is sitting in his room at the famous Rockfield Studios in rural Monmouthshire in Wales, drinking coffee and looking relaxed ahead of the album's release and tour. Tall and slim – hence his nickname; he was born Nick Jones – Wire looks younger than his 45 years. He clearly knows his stuff about the bass, although he claims he isn't remotely technical.

"There's quite a lot of baritone bass on this album," he continues. "We've got a Burns baritone and a Gretsch Guild B-401 that is my studio faithful. They've become quite important instruments, especially for the post-punk stuff on the album. I think you can get a lot out of it, in that shiny New Order sort of way. The Ovation, which is the Kim Gordon bass, has been used a lot too, especially for the low stuff. It's a fucking heavy bass though... I can't use it live."

Wire's contribution to the Manics' music has increased over the last few albums: he has even taken lead vocals on a number of tracks. Is he turning into Sting or Paul McCartney, then? "Definitely not!" he laughs. "I haven't played bass and sung live yet. The only time I might is on the track 'Futurology', where I sing the chorus. I've been practising, but it's the most unnatural feeling. It's difficult for me: backing vocals usually puts me off a band as I'm so fucking finicky. I think Kim Gordon gets away with it, though, as she always looked cool at a mic, as did Melissa Auf Der Maur – she's one of my favourite bassists."

Wire has been known in the past to downplay his musical ability, admitting that Bradfield has played bass on "around 5 or 10 per cent of the [Manics' songs]", but his passion for his instrument and his admiration for some of his bass heroes is obvious. Asked how he would describe himself as a bass player, he grins and replies: "Well, I think I'm pretty unique! Growing up, my heroes were pretty much rock bassists. I loved Roger Glover of Deep Purple because he was so in the pocket: he just kept out of the way of everything and was one of the most melodic, gracious bass players there has ever been. And then there's Geddy Lee of Rush who I look up to like an absolute god: I've never heard a bass player like him, really."

He adds: "I've always tried in a very punk way to take tiny little elements

"THE ONLY THING WORSE THAN MUSIC SHOPS FOR BEING FULL OF CTS IS THE APPLE STORE. THAT'S JUST ABOUT TAKEN OVER"**

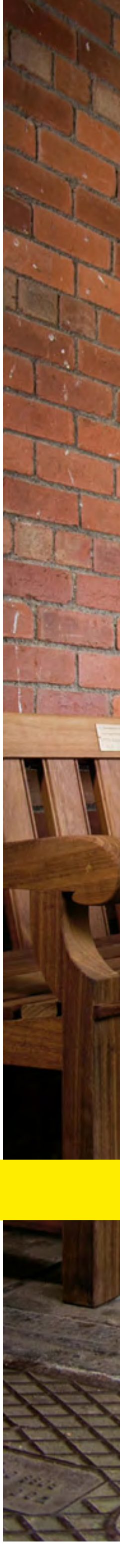
of Geddy and Ronnie Lane. I loved the melody of Ronnie Lane and the way he just wanders. The track 'Yes' off [the Manics' 1994 album] *The Holy Bible* actually doesn't really work, but it does. James was like 'It's just not the right notes!' and I said 'I know, but it works'. So Ronnie Lane is a big influence, as is Russell Webb from the Skids. Also Derek Forbes, who I bow down to as the greatest British bass player ever for the early Simple Minds stuff. I could never be those people, but you can hear a lot of Simple Minds on this album."

Wire's bass-lines have often been experimental over the years, he muses. "There is *The Holy Bible* version of us, and this version of us. There have been some heavy, meaty bass-lines like 'Peeled Apples' and 'Archives Of Pain', and then there's the in-the-pocket stuff like 'Send Away The Tigers' and 'Everything Must Go', which is me locking in with Sean [Moore, drummer]. I prefer playing like that: if I can obliterate myself into Sean's bass drum then I'm happy."

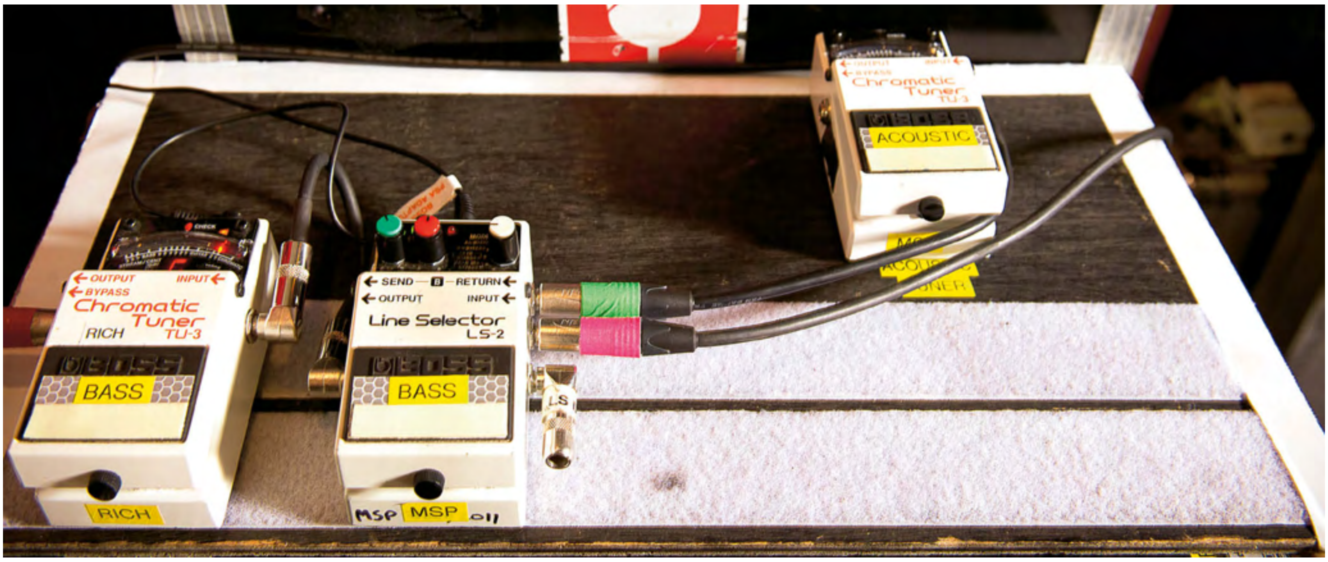
Seeing Wire's basses lined up, many of them typically covered in glitter or stickers of the Welsh flag, the Sex Pistols and Nirvana, it's clear that he has an eclectic taste when it comes to his choice of bass. "When I started off all I cared about was how a bass looked," he admits, "so I was obsessed with a Rickenbacker and a white Paul Simonon Fender. That was pretty much all I cared about. Then I was desperate to have a Charvel. I had the original white one that I smashed after one gig in Coleraine University in front of about 14 people. It actually sounded really good, so I really regret that one."

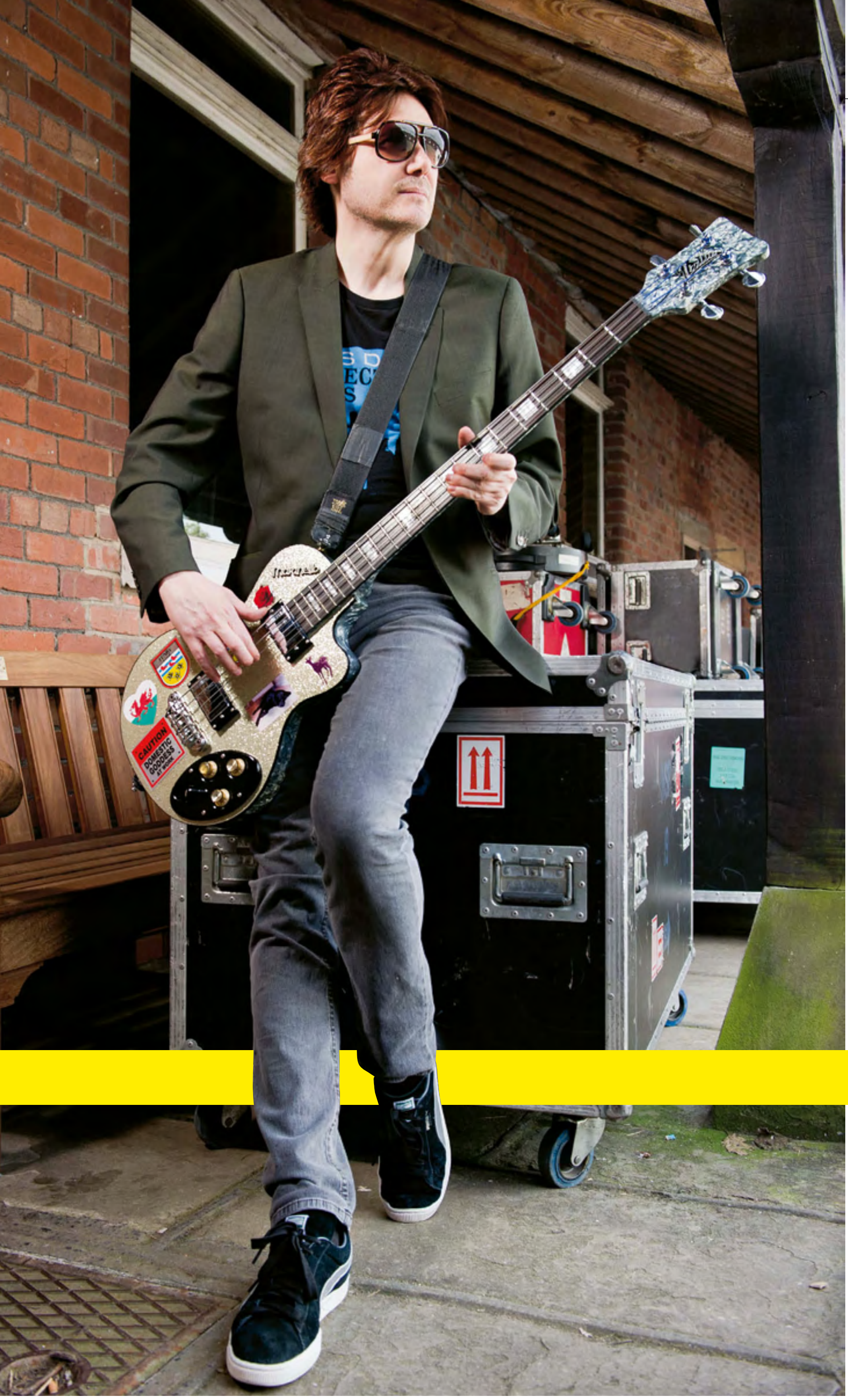
Readers of a certain age will recall that Wire was famous for smashing up basses on stage in the Manics' early days. He continues: "I also smashed my white Fender Precision at Sheffield Leadmill, so two of my icons were gone. Then I had a Gibson Firebird or Thunderbird or whatever the fuck it's called: I didn't like those, they were like planks. I used Fender Precisions and Jazzes for a long time even though I really disliked them. I've never got on with Fenders at all, but I used them through [the albums] *Everything Must Go* and *This Is My Truth, Tell Me Yours*."

He continues: "I had a black Jazz that was all right, but I just hated playing them live because they were so heavy and cumbersome. I ended up smashing one to bits at the Millennium Stadium gig on New Year's Eve in



"I THINK THAT ROCK MUSIC IS ABSOLUTELY EMPTY. IT'S BECOME A PARODY OF AMERICAN POP-PUNK AND IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL GOOD"





1999. I decided to move on and since then I've got two 70s Guilds, a B-401 for the studio and a B-301 for live, which are my go-to basses these days. I also use Maranellos live because they look so good and you can chuck them around and they stay in tune, which is rare for a bass. That's the other thing with a Fender: for a bass player like me who jumps around, it would go out of tune. I've never tuned my bass on stage in 24 years, I just wouldn't do it."

On *Futurology*, Wire mainly used an Ovation as well as a Tokai Precision copy. He smiles when he thinks about how he winds his bandmates up with his choice of bass. "I do frustrate the hell out of James and Sean, as I tend to gravitate towards odd basses. I picked the Tokai up pretty cheap in a music shop in Newport, but it's turned into a fucking brilliant bass."

Throughout his career, Wire says that he has kept his set-up relatively basic, although he did experiment with different pedals early on. "I did have a really good Hiwatt early on because of John Entwistle," he explains, "but that got trashed as well. I also had a Trace Elliot to try and be Duff McKagan, but it was way too twangy. But if I'm honest, I've no idea if I have a specific set-up. In the studio I tend to use a lot of Avalon U5 preamp/DIs. Loads of my favourite records from the 70s are just straight DI. I'm pretty sure most of *London Calling* is just straight DI."

Speaking of former Guns N' Roses bassist McKagan, Wire has fond memories of Duff contributing a bass-line to the Manics track 'A Billion Balconies Facing The Sun'. "Duff was an absolute blast," he says. "Guns N' Roses were such a moment for us in the 80s. They really did feel like our band, because all the music we loved until that point was kind of second-hand, whereas Guns seemed like the perfect mix of punk and rock'n'roll. He's such a sweetheart. We sent the track over to him and he did such a fantastic bass-line. The trouble then was that I had to copy it live! He's very much a plectrum man and I haven't used them for around 15 years, as I can't really connect with my bass without using my fingers. He loved the song, though, and was like [adopts American accent], 'You guys have done it again – it sounds like Lindsey Buckingham mixed with the Clash'. You can't get much better than that, can you?"

Wire says he doesn't have predetermined ideas or a specific riff he reverts to when buying a bass. "I just look at it and buy it purely on the vibe," he says, before uttering the immortal line, "The only thing worse than music shops for being full of cunts is the Apple store. That's just about taken over."

Something triggers his memory and he retells a story from the band's early days when he and bandmate Richey Edwards, now missing for 19 years and officially presumed dead in 2008, visited a guitar shop while on tour. "We were playing Cambridge Junction, and me and Richey went in to this guitar shop, literally looking for a guitar to smash up that night, like a Squier Telecaster or similar. The guy in there was so supercilious. He saw us looking at it and it was shit, probably worth £150."

Wire adds: "He came over and asked if we wanted to try it out, and Richey and me said 'Nah, we're just looking for something to smash tonight, we're doing a gig' – and he literally said, 'You can't buy it then'. It was a shitty Squier Telecaster copy!

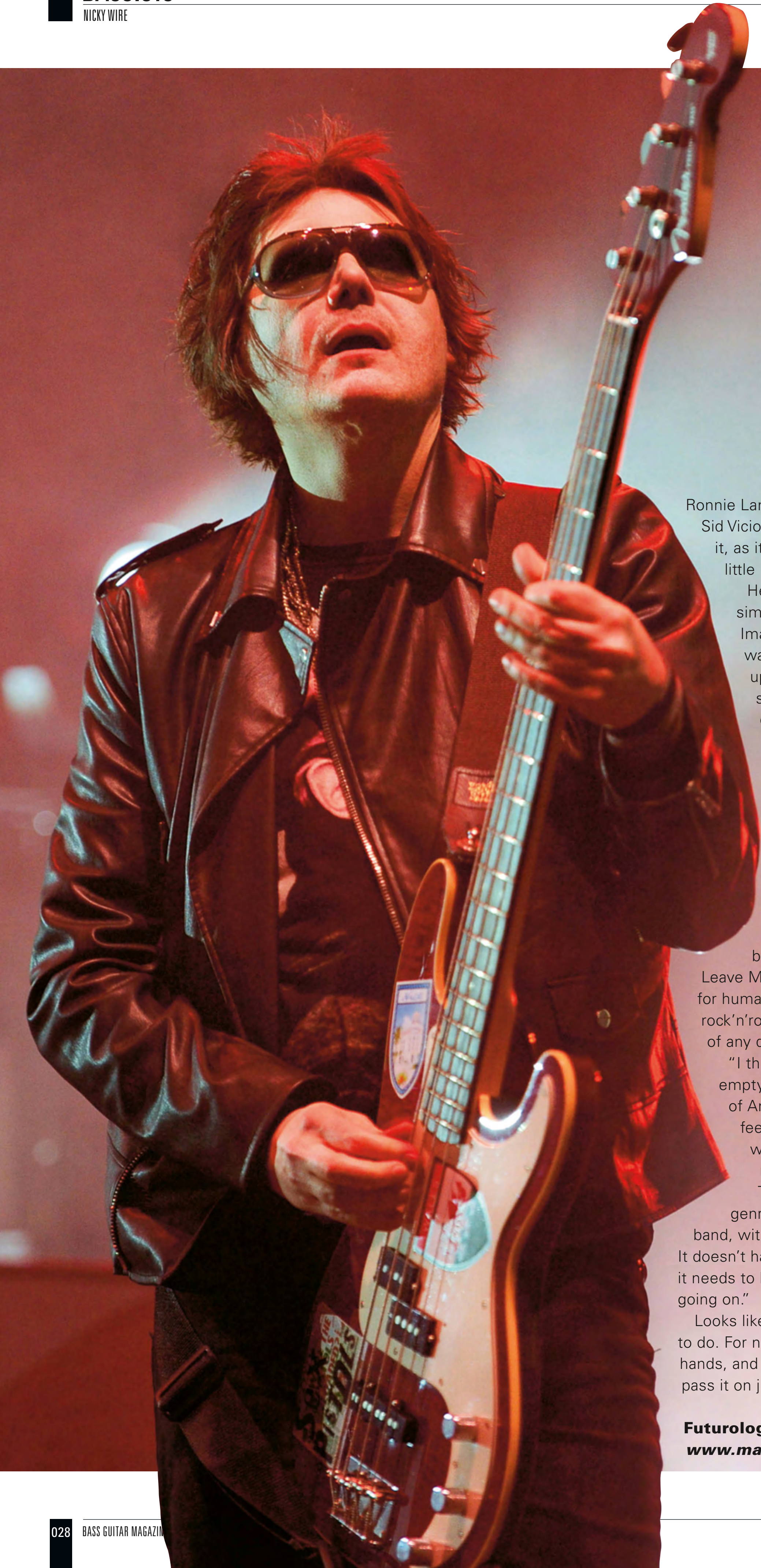
He was saying that it was out of order, that it was a precious thing and so on. That disregard has always been deep in us."

With modern technology and the availability of videos and tutorials, Wire thinks that "just playing" is still the best way to improve as a bass player. "James will still show me a bass-line now and again," he says. "There's no fucking pride or shame in the band from any of us. I'm really humble as a bass player. I've always been musical and I've always had timing: it's bothering to play in time with everyone else that's usually my problem! I put my bass down and started skipping during 'You Love Us' at Glastonbury in 1999. James was looking across at me, like, 'Where the fuck is the bass?' But that's the element of performance I have. On [the Manics' 1993 album] *Gold Against The Soul* we really upped the game. It's not our greatest album but it's very kind of muso. I never thought I could play the bass like Flea, but I did on the track 'Drug Drug Druggy'. It's not really me, though."

Asked for tips for aspiring bassists, Wire says: "For me it's about keeping out of the way of great melodies and great riffs. Obviously, if your band is based around a bass riff like the Chilis it's different, but for us I always felt there was so much going on between James's guitar and the vocals there was no need for me to interfere with that."

The punk influence that has stayed with the Manics is evident throughout *Futurology*: Wire says that his bass-lines are inspired by the bands he has always loved. Renowned for playing his bass low, Wire says: "It's been the fucking bane of my life. It's ruined my shoulders and back jumping around with it, but I could never do it any other way. Peter Hook was a hero and even

"FOR ME IT'S ABOUT KEEPING OUT OF THE WAY OF GREAT MELODIES AND GREAT RIFFS"



Ronnie Lane had it in a really good place, as did Sid Vicious. Duff plays it low too. I do regret it, as it's so much fucking easier to play it a little higher."

He adds: "For its absolute deepness but simplicity, I love the bass-line in 'Public Image' by PiL. Considering Jah Wobble wasn't really a bass player, they turned up with such an amazing comeback single: that bass rumble fucking destroys you. It's unsurpassable. I wish I'd written some of Jah's and loads of Geddy's bass-lines. They add countermelodies to everything – vocals, guitar and drums. Every instrument is speaking in its own language, it's totally astounding."

Futurology flirts between disillusionment with the unevenness and injustices of society ('Let's Go To War' and 'Black Square') to the baggage of the past ('The Next Jet to Leave Moscow'). There is a belief in a future for humanity, although Wire believes that rock'n'roll is now simply a career path, devoid of any desire for political statement.

"I think that rock music is absolutely empty," he sighs. "It's become a parody of American pop-punk and it just doesn't feel good. There is no relation to me for what was punk, and there's definitely no relation to me for what was rock. There is an emptiness to that kind of genre. It's crying out for any kind of rock band, with any kind of attitude or social edge. It doesn't have to be full-on political diatribes, but it needs to have some engagement with what is going on."

Looks like there's still work for the Manics to do. For now, that baton is still firmly in their hands, and Nicky Wire doesn't seem willing to pass it on just yet. ■

Futurology *is released in June. Info: www.manicstreetpreachers.com*

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FRANKFURT MUSIKMESSE 2014

MUSIKMESSE IS EUROPE'S PREMIER MUSIC EVENT, HELD IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY, AND BGM WAS THERE TO HUNT DOWN NEW BASS GEAR ON THE SHOWROOM FLOOR. HERE ARE SOME OF OUR HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2014 SHOW, WHICH ATTRACTED A WHOPPING 110,000 VISITORS FROM 142 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES...

AMPEG ANNOUNCES NEW BA SERIES COMBOS

FIVE NEW MODELS FROM BASS AMP VETERANS INCLUDING BASS SCRAMBLER

Ampeg unleashed their new range of bass combos with live performance usage at the forefront of design at this year's show. A nice touch on these combos is the 60-degree monitoring angle and the new overdrive circuit to get that tube-like sound. The redesigned range includes the BA-108, BA-110, BA-112, BA-115 and BA-210. They are truly sleek, with a modern twist for the discerning bass player.

"Ampeg designed the world's first bass amps, and we are setting a new standard with the new BA bass combo series," says Ampeg product manager Zane Williams. "We are giving bass players classic Ampeg tone and power, with performance-driven features like the Bass Scrambler overdrive and a 60-degree monitoring angle that allows for versatility in any playing situation."

Info: www.ampeg.com

Just a short while after the Californian NAMM Show, it's time to fly east to Germany and experience its European equivalent: Frankfurt's Musikmesse. The show went down over 12-15 March and, after more than 25 years, it's now one of the biggest musical instrument and production trade shows in the world.

It's big. Seriously big, in fact. This isn't the first time we've been out at the Musikmesse, so we knew what to expect, right? Wrong. There are six halls sitting around a huge central square, where most of this year's activity was to be found (it was sunny, after all). We should also mention at this point that each hall is about the size of a football pitch. Standing in the centre of the Frankfurt Trade Fair ground, with staff flogging energy drinks to our left and their competition flogging whisky and coke to our right, where to start is already a bit of a tough decision. It's only 9am so the energy drink wins (something we'll be thankful of later) and we head in to

MAJOR SOLLER BASS RANGE ON DISPLAY

SLOVAK CRAFTSMANSHIP WOWED THE CROWDS

We really enjoyed the look and feel of Soller's bass range. Using only high quality selected woods and respected hardware brands such as Hipshot and Gotoh, the Slovakian luthiers boasted one of the most popular stands of the entire show. The range of finishes and configurations made Soller a brand to look out for.

Info: www.sollerguitars.com

NEW COMPACT LANEY EN ROUTE

LANEY LX10B PROMISES KILLER PERFORMANCE FOR ITS SIZE

We were impressed with Laney's new LX10B versatile compact bass amp, which is designed to give you sonic performance out of proportion to its size. The LX10B features a single channel with a two-band EQ plus a shape switch. This gives you a predetermined EQ setting, and you can then dial in your own settings using the EQ. The LX10B comes equipped with a tape/CD input for jamming along to your favourite songs and a headphone input, plus a custom voiced 5" driver.

Info: www.laney.co.uk.

GIBSON'S LATEST MODELS REVEALED

INCLUDES MIDTOWN SIGNATURE AND UPDATED EB FIVE-STRING

The Midtown Signature bass is the latest model from the USA guitar giant, Gibson. The Midtown Signature has a solid mahogany back, milled out to create resonant chambers for its characteristic tonal qualities, with a glued-on maple top. Similar to the 335 with its thinline construction and hollow chambers, the Midtown Signature has a different tonal character to a full solid body, but retains the classic pickup assembly with single volume control, master tone control, and three-way pickup selector switch. There's a three-point bridge with a 34" scale and a round vintage-style neck shape, echoing retro sentiments in a new model.

Next up, Gibson showed off the EB five-string and four-string basses. The EB series was debuted at last year's show, and this year they have introduced the five-string version. The EB basses blend a comfortable body shape with a glued-in full-scale length neck and two humbucker pickups.

Info: www.gibson.com

JHS UNVEILS TWO REISSUED VINTAGE BASSES

THE VINTAGE V80 AND THE VINTAGE V90

Vintage's reissued V80 and V90 basses features 'roll-control', which allows players to roll between single coil and double coil sounds. The V80 and V90 series features a basswood body with a Canadian hard maple bolt-on neck and a rosewood fingerboard. The V80 has one single Wilkinson WJMB-B pickup, while the V90 has both the Wilkinson WJMB-B and the WJMB-N.

The V80 comes in either boulevard black or golden amber finishes and retails for £279; the V90 comes in candy apple red or pearl white and retails for £329. See page 51 for our review.

Info: www.jhs.co.uk

Wasn't this bass on our last cover? Why yes, it's Korn bassist Fieldy's splendid Ibanez K5

PALMER INTRODUCES LATEST ALL-TUBE HEAD

SINGLE-ENDED, HIGH-GAIN BLUTSTURZ, NEW FOR 2014

Palmer Musical Instruments unveiled the eye-catching amp head with a similarly distinctive name: the Blutsturz. The head is equipped with an impressive array of sounds, an inbuilt speaker sim, and looped effects.

Palmer says that the Blutsturz is "a class A amp head, equipped with a modest KT120 end tube that achieves 20W amplifier power". On this distinctively sci-fi-looking bit of kit, the head has a single channel circuit with controls for gain, tone and master volume. There are two switchable amp stages meaning that you get all the, er, basses covered, from clean to crunchy, right up to a tone more suited to the metallers out there.

Info: www.palmer-germany.com

SCHERTLER'S NEW FIDELITY

SWISS COMPANY DEBUTS LATEST COMBOS

Schertler specialises in live performance gear, so the addition of three amps in the new Bass Fidelity range was a welcome announcement at Frankfurt. The range is built on a love for high-quality performance without any tone manipulation. Designed for both stage and studio use, each amp in the series features a preamp section that will let you shape your sound as required. There's also a Class D power amp coupled with extension woofers to supply the deep and clear tone that Schertler has become renowned for.

The three models available will be the compact 300W B10, which with its 10" woofer will be perfect for travelling, practice and small venue usage; the 40W B12 with a 12" woofer; and the flagship model of the range, the 500W B15 combo, equipped with a 15" woofer.

Info: www.schertler.com

WARWICK TAKES HOME MIPA AWARD

LWA 1000 COMES OUT TOP IN AMP CATEGORY

Warwick bagged the Musikmesse International Press Award for best bass amplifier at this year's show. The Jonas Hellborg-designed LWA 1000 got the top prize, voted for by a selection of music magazines from around the world. The LWA 1000, in its aluminum casing, has 1000 watts of power operating over two independent channels, ensuring that you get a crystal clear sound no matter what stage you're on.

The MIPA is recognised as the "Grammy Award of the MI and Pro Audio industry" worldwide. Hellborg, head of design at Warwick Amplification and renowned bass artist, accepted the award on behalf of Warwick during the ceremony.

Info: www.warwickbass.com

HAGSTROM RESURRECTS SUPER SWEDE

REPLICATES INSTRUMENT USED BY ABBA BASSIST

Considered one of Hagstrom's flagship models from back in the late 1970s, the Super Swede bass has been resurrected for the 2014 Musikmesse show. The Northern Super Swede replicates the instrument that Abba's Rutger Gunnarsson played on their hits. It's a true neck-through model, too – a lone slab of mahogany runs from headstock to bridge, surrounded by double-cutaway mahogany wings. The pickups on this Northern Super Swede are hand-wound J-types by Lundgren.

Info: www.hagstromguitars.eu

The Big Cheese

IT'S BEEN OVER 20 YEARS SINCE PRIMUS MADE THEIR MAJOR LABEL DEBUT AND EMBARKED ON A VOYAGE THROUGH THE SEAS OF CHEESE AND BEYOND. LES CLAYPOOL TELLS BEN COOPER ABOUT THE ALBUM

Repackages of a band's major albums aren't exactly a new thing. In fact, it seems that record labels are often so intent on wringing every last penny out of fans that they release more reissues than new albums.

However, while it might be wrong to lump last year's reissue of Primus's major-label debut, *Sailing The Seas Of Cheese*, in with all the other cynical efforts, anyone who knows the band will know this isn't the case. Even a cursory look at the package confirms it really is a labour of love, loaded with extras for the fans.

Speaking to Les in 2013, he was in a typically loquacious mood and happy to tell *BGM* about what led the band to remix the album. After all, most bands would do it on the 20th anniversary, or maybe 25th. Primus plumped for the 22nd, but then, they have always done things their own way.

Before the recording and release of *Sailing The Seas of Cheese* back in 1991, Primus had already attracted serious attention thanks to two underground hit albums: the live *Suck On This* and their studio debut, *Frizzle Fry*. With a burgeoning alternative rock scene picking up speed (largely as a kickback against the slick AOR direction that mainstream rock had taken through the 80s), Primus were snapped up by Interscope – but they weren't going to be pushed around just because they'd made it onto a major label, as Les explains.

"We were young and full of beans," he says. "We thought we had the world at our feet. Although the label started suggesting producers and whatnot, we just told them 'We have our engineer and we're going to produce it ourselves'. And that was that."

Such individualism has been the hallmark of Claypool's career. This is, after all, the man who turned up to an audition for the bass player's spot in Metallica

"I THINK THAT HAD I PICKED UP THE TRUMPET OR BANJO OR WHATEVER, I'D STILL BE MAKING THE SAME KIND OF MUSIC BUT WITH A DIFFERENT TIMBRE"

and suggested that they jam on some Isley Brothers tunes. Claypool's output has always been wilfully quirky, and nowhere is this more apparent than in his dazzling and instantly recognisable bass chops.

Although Claypool's playing had attracted plaudits before the release of the album, it was on *Sailing...* that he first recorded with his legendary six-string fretless, made by famed luthier Carl Thompson.

"I got one of those after a guy at a music convention pulled out this six-string fretless by Carl, and I was like 'Holy shit, what is that? I gotta get me one of those'. Years later I met Carl and told him about it, and he made me one. At first it was like wrestling an octopus. I started banging on it and tapping on it, and before you know I'd written the riff to 'Jerry Was A Race Car Driver'. You know, now I come to think of it, that riff might have been the first I ever wrote on the six-string."

Although Claypool's use of the six-string sparked a wave of popularity for the instrument, he admits to being more comfortable on a four-string, rarely dabbling in the extended range these days. As for that famous riff, it came to him like his many other great lines: through playing, pure and simple.

"I get most riffs from essentially doodling on the bass. When I do these interviews I often find myself sketching things on notepads. You know, geometric shapes, little cartoons and all that. I end up with a hotel room full of them. Sometimes I do something really cool and then I keep it and take it home, but a lot of them just disappear into the ether. That's kind of what riffs are like."

Walk into a well-stocked bass department and if someone is trying out a six-string, you'll probably hear them murder the 'Jerry...' riff. I wonder how Claypool feels about one of his best creations being throttled on a daily basis around the world. He laughs: "Well, whenever I hear some young kid trying to play my stuff I feel sorry for them. Of course, it's very flattering. It's what I did when I was younger, copying Larry Graham licks. It's exciting to know people like my stuff so much."

The fact that most of the songs are bass-led should come as no surprise of course, but Les is happy to admit that the bass, though he loves it, is simply the tool he happened to pick out of the box.

"It's my musical crayon, you know. I grabbed it out of the box and started drawing. I think that had I picked up the trumpet or banjo or whatever, I'd still be making the same kind of music but with a different timbre. But what I do with it changes on the musical situation. If I'm sitting in with Booker T & The MGs, I just lay down a foundation, keep that groove going. That's what I grew up doing in old-school R&B bands, no slapping and tapping. But in Primus it's my composition tool, so I get out there with it."

With his grounding in R&B providing a rock-solid sense of groove and timing, how did he come to develop such monstrous technical chops? "The slap stuff came out of my love of Larry Graham, Louis Johnson and Stanley Clarke," he says. "All the chordal stuff I do comes out of necessity from the style of guitarist that Ler [Larry Lalonde] is. He's a very textural guitarist, so I lay down a foundation with the drums and then throw in some chords to mimic a rhythm guitar part." And what about the tapping? "Well that all came from hearing Tony Levin on the Chapman stick. I was like, damn I love that sound but the Stick… I mean what the hell is it? How do you play the damn thing? So I just mimicked the technique on the top strings."

Like any Primus album you'd care to pick, *Sailing...* is loaded with standout bass moments, and it's alive with a feeling of improvisation and energy. Incredibly, most of the songs were one-shot takes. It's a fact that surprises even the great man himself.

"When I was remixing it, there was one song that had three takes and then a couple of two-takers. The rest were all in one take. Pretty much all that material had been written and toured before we went into the studio. We'd been playing them so much we went in and laid them down. You can definitely hear a few clangs on the guitars, and the odd wavering kick drum, but you know we've always been about capturing mood and feeling, not perfection."

One of the classic songs on the album, with what is probably Claypool's most admired bass-line, is 'Tommy The Cat'. With its finger-knotting slap lick and stuttering scat-style vocals the song is a perennial favourite in the Primus back catalogue, and one of which its creator is justly proud.

"You know, it's definitely one of my prouder moments. I had that riff in my head for a long time and would bounce it off different drummers, then I had that vocal line 'Hey baby do you wanna lay down with me' and I just kept trying to force them together. Eventually I made it work. It was a nightmare, but once you've got it, it's like riding a bike – you never forget how to do it."

With the launch of the album and the success of 'Tommy The Cat' on MTV, Primus ended up featuring in the movie *Bill And Ted's Bogus Journey*, where they lost to the fictional group Wyld Stallyns in a battle of the bands. The irony of the band featuring in the film and its soundtrack, alongside 'hair' bands such as Winger and Slaughter, isn't lost on Les.

"That was straight-up record company promotion, man. I mean here we were, being beaten by the Wyld Stallyns. But you know, it gave me five minutes of fame, looking like a rooster on stage!"

Cynicism aside, the film boosted Primus's profile and began a career where their unique sound reached a bigger audience than would otherwise be expected. While musical fads have come and gone, leaving a litter of once-famous bands in their wake, Primus are still making the music they want for a fanbase who adore them.

Looking back on the album after all these years, I wonder how Claypool feels it stacks up? He muses: "I worked my ass off remixing this album, and I think what still comes across even after all these years is the enthusiasm we had, this eagerness and innocence. We were all finding new sounds, new ways of playing. I think it rates as one of our best, along with *Frizzle Fry*."

You know what? I don't think there's anyone who'd disagree.

© Goatious Foot

STICK MEN

WHO DO WE SEND TO INTERVIEW THE PIONEERING EMMETT CHAPMAN, INVENTOR OF THE CHAPMAN STICK? WHY, A STICK EXPERT OF COURSE. ENTER THE MIGHTY NICK BEGGS...

I had no idea what a Chapman Stick was until the summer of 1978, when I saw Tony Levin play live at the Knebworth festival with Peter Gabriel. To the uninitiated it is hard to work out what is actually happening with the Stick when viewed live, and I had to listen to recorded material before I was able to crack the code.

It's also fair to say that the Chapman Stick is no more a bass instrument than a piano is: in fact, the Stick is more akin to a piano in a number of ways. Because the player's fingers hammer or tap onto the strings, it could pass as a percussion instrument. It's designed for the implementation of left and right hand independence in the same way as a piano, but with the use of a fretboard.

Listening further to Tony Levin's work with Gabriel and King Crimson I was able to discern a new and exciting approach to bass playing that utilised upper harmonic registers and rhythmical ideas not usually available to four-string players. But it wasn't until turbulence within my own band arose that I was confronted with the full potential of the instrument.

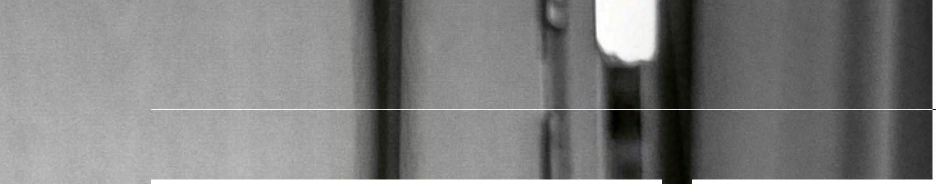
After the departure of our lead singer there were several names in the hat to replace him – at least, until my bandmates played a wild card...

"If you become the new lead singer," they suggested, "we'll have a Chapman Stick made for you to play on the next album."

What? Lead singer and Chapman Stick player all in one day? This was quite a promotion... or would it be a poisoned chalice? Either way, I accepted and the Stick did change my life, although in hindsight I'm still not sure how good the subsequent recordings were.

The thing that has always amazed me about Stick players is how stylistically diverse they are. You would think that by giving a bunch of musicians a 10-string fretboard, they would all come up with the same thing. However, that simply isn't true. Someone asked me recently if 10 strings were really necessary: after all, Jaco did it all with just four. My response was that Jaco sadly died before the first five-string bass was commercially available, but if he had lived longer, he might well have experimented with more strings. Fundamentally, it's not about the tools you use, it's about the music – and that's all that matters.

With that in mind, it's great to have this opportunity to interview the creator and manufacturer of the Chapman Stick, Mr Emmett Chapman, for *Bass Guitar Magazine*. Emmett and his wife Yuta have been a great support and inspiration to me ever since I became a Stick player in 1983 and it was a pleasure to speak to him at his home in California.



Nick Beggs: Emmett, what was your musical background before the creation of the Stick?

Emmett Chapman: It was largely genetic, from my half-Italian mother's side of the family. As a kid it seemed I saw colours and heard music more intensely than anyone I knew, except for my mom, who educated me well in those sensory experiences. My grandmother bought me an accordion when I was 13, and I quickly began to play it every Sunday in church. In high school I started playing ukelele, and then guitar, and in my last year of college at UCLA I quit my drill press operator job and formed a trio with piano, drums and me playing guitar and singing. I'm self-taught, with no academic music studies.

NB What was the Eureka moment that brought about the Stick as we know it?

EC It was the simple physical act on 26 August 1969 of placing my right hand over the fretboard from the top side and drumming my first and third fingers in pentatonic scales blues style while I squeezed familiar left hand chords in 4/4 time. Immediately the selection and valuation process kicked in, and I knew I'd never play guitar techniques again.

NB How many developments and modifications have you made to the instrument since its conception?

EC A year after my creation of the unique method, which I named Free Hands – with both hands approaching the fretboard from opposite sides, fingers perpendicular to the strings – I designed the most minimal string tapping instrument and called it the Electric Stick. It was bodiless, just a box with pickup facing downward toward the strings, and very lightweight with a narrow Macassar ebony neck and nine strings tensioned with violin tuning pegs. Since then, production Stick designs have gotten longer, wider, heavier and with completely adjustable hardware.

NB Tell us about the various types of Stick that are available.

EC Current 10-string Stick models with 36-inch bass guitar scale lengths come in three different widths. There's the standard 3.25" neck; the Ten-String Grand with 10 wider-spaced strings on a 3.75" Grand Stick neck, normally intended for 12 strings; and the new Railboard with a 3.5" neck. There's also the Grand Stick, with 12 more closely-spaced strings on a 3.75" neck; and two shorter, guitar-scale models, including the 10-string Alto Stick, which is generally an octave up in pitch from the long scale models, and the short scale 12-string Stick Guitar SG12.

NB And the bass models?

EC The Stick Bass model SB8 has the same width and length as our standard 10-string Stick, but with eight strings, usually tuned in consecutive fourths from the low bass B. It feels like a Stick and is a dedicated two-handed string tapping instrument, but sounds more like a bass guitar. The 34" scale NS/Stick bass guitar with body and headless neck was designed by Ned Steinberger and me, and also has eight strings usually tuned like the SB8. It is uncompromisingly set up, with a low Stick action for tapping, while allowing conventional bass guitar techniques as well. Multiply these eight basic models by myriad custom tunings and combinations of features, and the sky's the limit. The bridge and nut hardware on all models is designed to accept any gauge string at any string position: there are no added charges for odd tunings.

NB How important has Tony Levin been in the global perception of the Stick?

EC I've known Tony since 1976, when he visited our Yucca Trail home in the Laurel Canyon Hills. I demoed a Stick for him, with the bass side going through heavy compression and sometimes phasing. He was enthusiastic about that sound as well as the whole instrument and technique, and bought one of my earliest Sticks. Later, I heard that sound live at the Hollywood Bowl, when he played 'Elephant Talk' on Stick with King Crimson. It's the kick at the bass attack, like a clutch engaging, followed by a sustain that seemingly 'blooms'. Strangely, the sound of an upright bass could also be described that way. From my perspective, Tony persuaded the world that the Stick was a legitimate instrument and, above all else, that it was cool. Tony has always had an indefinable stage presence: this worked wonders for the Stick and opened my market up to bass guitar players. I had been a guitarist trying to extend my orchestral scope, but now I was getting Stick orders from bass players. And it's true, the Stick's bass side is sonically sufficient and a voice unto itself, whereas many Stick players feel the need to add effects to the melody. Only a few players, mostly in the classical genre, like to play their melody side 'clean'.

NB What are the general methods of amplifying the instrument?

EC We have four pickup modules for The Stick. The two passive ones are the original classic Stickup and Villex's PASV-4, both of which need the standard high-impedance inputs of guitar and bass guitar amplifiers and effects boxes. Our battery-powered ACTV-2 module is not sensitive to impedances and can plug into mixing boards without loss of the very high frequencies. Our new one-piece, hard anodised aluminum Railboard model with the Villex R-Block switches automatically from passive to active modes when it senses phantom power from a mixing board. It can be plugged directly into the board's XLR mike inputs for enhanced sound and volume through 50' or 100' of cable.

NB What is the greatest challenge to you as an instrument developer?

EC It all seems to come naturally to me – except for the hardest work of all, the business end, which Yuta and I do together: taxes, insurance, payroll, banking and regulations. I also purchase parts, supplies and services for Stick manufacture. The quality control is challenging because things can and do go wrong, and parts have to be carefully inspected and often returned.

NB Tell us about the growing global community of Stick players.

EC In the early 90s, with the first Stick player membership lists and discussion forums on the internet, I was surprised at the overall interest of Stick owners and players in forming groups, attending Stick seminars and teaching and assisting one another. This aspect of the worldwide Stick player community has grown exponentially. I was never a group person and needed to invent, or reinvent, things for myself. That's good for starters, especially when inventing a new musical instrument with its own unique playing method, but what has followed is an amazing culture around Stick artists, teachers, organisers and publishers.

NB Are you happy to see how your instrument has been used over the years?

EC I like to say that, as an instrument, the Stick is a mirror, not just of the player's chosen genre and personal style, but also of his or her personality. I'm happy beyond any expectations to witness the huge breadth of music in the hands of Stick performers around the world. Every Stick Night event is a variety show of different temperaments, musical directions and skillful variations of the Stick tapping technique.

NB What is it that all Stick players possess that makes them want to pick up the instrument?

EC There is no Stick player type, and that's the beauty of it. They come in all shapes and sizes, and their physical gifts, no doubt mapped out in the brain with equivalent priority, are varied – in the hands, the digits, the arms, whole body, from the head, the heart, the gut. Some like to be walking. Others need to be singing. ■

Visit www.stick.com for more information.

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HEAD BACK

HATS OFF TO THE GREAT TINA WEYMOUTH, SOMETIME OF TALKING HEADS AND NOW OF TOM TOM CLUB, OLDER, WISER AND STILL LAYING DOWN IMPECCABLE GROOVES. JOEL MCIVER MEETS HER

'Live long enough and everything will happen to you!" advises Tina Weymouth, veteran of four decades in the rock business, when I promise that I'll try not to bore her in our interview with questions she's heard before.

It's a fair comment, but fortunately Tina is not often found in the pages of bass magazines and therefore unlikely to be faced with a barrage of 'When will Talking Heads reform?'-type questions. No, we have a higher purpose in mind, notably finding out about her philosophy when it comes to bass – a worldview that extends throughout her approach to art as a whole.

"I use a Höfner Contemporary bass, both on and off the road. It's cherry red, no pickguard," she says. "I do love the Höfners. That classic Les Paul shape really balances well and is very lightweight. They're quite sturdy: I'm not somebody who does funky pops or anything like that, so I don't have to beat my basses up. It's completely hollow, which is really great for my size, because I'm small. Does that sound sad?"

It does a bit, yes.

"I suppose I do have small hands," she considers. "Being a bass player,

No longer on a road to nowhere: Tina and Chris Frantz

it is an advantage to be a big tall fellow. Many of my favourite bass players are big and tall with big hands, like Bootsy Collins."

Like Krist Novoselic of Nirvana, we suggest, possibly the tallest rock bassist of them all.

"I've never seen Nirvana," says Tina. "He has big hands? That's really great. I mean, there are no limits to getting around the fretboard. Django Reinhardt could get around with just a few fingers, but I do love being able to move around freely on the Höfners, without carrying a great weight around on your shoulders or in a gig bag."

Tina's current band, Tom Tom Club, have released several studio and live albums since the split of Talking Heads, although the group already existed as a side project alongside the mothership band. When Talking Heads singer David Byrne dissolved the group in 1991, Tina and her husband, Heads drummer Chris Frantz, made Tom Tom Club their full-time band and began a long sequence of album and tour cycles which continues today. The most recent TTC release, an EP called *Downtown Rockers*, appeared in 2013 after a hiatus of 11 years since its predecessor.

Asked about the gap between releases, Tina explains, reasonably enough: "There didn't seem to be any pressing need to make more records, because there's too many records out there already, and no way to promote and get them

out there. We spent a lot of time touring a lot since then, and we've done remixes and songs with other people."

Talking of touring, we recall a quote from Tina from some point in the 1980s, when she played live while pregnant and felt as though her bass was a shield, protecting her abdomen on stage. She laughs and explains, "You know something? The one and only time Talking Heads played in Athens, Greece, they put us in a stadium facing away from the audience! There were maybe 50 people in front of us, but most of the people were behind us, so they started pelting the policemen who were guarding the field. They didn't care about us, by the way: they cared about their football field and not getting it messed up. So the crowd started throwing cans at them and I was using my bass to bat away everything that was being thrown, because things were hitting the band too."

"The funny thing about being pregnant," she reflects, "is that it really translated into that boy [Tina's oldest son Robin] now being a really great musician and composer. He really understands the rhythm of drums and bass. There was no real learning curve there, he just went straight into it. He would start kicking as soon as he heard the kick drum, and he would be kicking against that bass guitar."

"The other one [Egan] is a visual artist and a very good musician and singer, but he saw the light! The boys really love each other and they didn't want to compete with each other. He had two incredible disappointments with two bands that were really good that broke up with fighting and everything – dire fallouts – so he became a visual artist and he had a one-man show in Los Angeles last year."

Looking back at the classic Talking Heads songs whose bass-lines so affected Tina's sons in utero, we have to know how the none-more-catchy bass part for the 1981 single 'Once In A Lifetime' came about. If you're familiar with this atmospheric tune, you may be aware of the story that accompanies it of producer Brian Eno asking each band-member to start a new bar in a different place, in order to create a weird, shifting feel. As a result, Tina's unforgettable bass riff is the song's anchor.

The $64,000 Question

OK, we asked if Talking Heads are ever going to reform, like the tabloid hacks we really are. You know you wanted us to...

"I don't think we ever had a fight. There was no falling-out. It was just weird. As [someone on] YouTube put it, 'David Byrne snuck out!' But that's just funny, and it's way in the past. We don't even think about that very much any more, except when journalists bring it up. It's really not a part of our lives. We're very proud of what we did with Talking Heads, and we say nothing against a reformation of the band, but I'm not holding my breath or anything. We have plenty to do and the band we have is so crack I really wouldn't want to interrupt it. I'm sure [promoters would pay a lot of money for a reformation], but there's really not enough money in the world for David Byrne. I don't think it'll ever happen."

"THE SPARSER THE MUSIC IS, THE BIGGER IT SOUNDS. I UNDERSTAND THE PHIL SPECTOR WALL-OF-SOUND THING, BUT THERE COMES A POINT WHERE LESS IS MORE"

"We had a big jam," she recalls, "and that's how it came about. I credit Chris for this, because his rhythm is so rock-solid and steady. He hits really hard on the kick and snare, and he puts all this swing in his hi-hat. That's where all the nuance comes from, and that makes it incredibly groovy. He has beautiful tone on his drums too, so it's already music before any one of us plucks a string or sits at a keyboard. It's always been fantastic to play with him."

In fanboy mode now, I rant a bit about the amazing spaces in Talking Heads' music which allowed Tina to move around with her bass parts. "That was intentional," she tells me. "We really worked to create that. Our heroes in that respect were the JBs, but also before that the Stax people like Steve Cropper, and Booker T & The MGs – people who had an incredible ear to allow everything to resonate. The sparser the music is, the bigger it sounds. I understand the Phil Spector wall-of-sound thing, but there comes a point where less is more. As you layer and layer and layer, things begin to cancel each other out and it's a real issue if you put on too much. It's like adding too much corn starch to gravy."

How about 'Road To Nowhere', whose staccato, syncopated bass-line ruled the airwaves for pretty much the whole of 1985? "I started that line with Chris on drums, and then the others played along with it," Tina explains. "It's usually like that nowadays, with the new songs that we write in Tom Tom Club. The other musicians are Bruce and Pablo Martin – our brothers from another mother – and Pablo started to learn bass when he was a teenager by listening to Talking Heads records. He's playing guitar with us now: it's wonderful playing with people who really understand. He got what we were doing with Tom Tom Club immediately when he joined us 23 years ago: he knew how to remain spare. We get each other."

Warming to her subject, Tina continues: "These guys listened to Talking Heads at high school, so when we formed Tom Tom Club with them, it was already there – we didn't have to tell them what to do. And we don't tell the listener what to do either. That's part of the beauty of having all that space and all that air. It gives you, as a listener, almost the ability to participate. That's one of the things I like when I'm listening to music: the ability to add my own parts in my head. Harmonies, counterpoints and so on: it's part of what makes music so sociable."

Asked if her approach to bass has evolved over the years, Tina explains: "I started on six-string guitar

Once in a lifetime: Tom Tom Club back in the 1990s, with Mark Roule (left) and Gary Pozner (right)

"I'M NOT OUT THERE TO IMPRESS YOU, I'M OUT THERE TO WOO YOU IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY"

when I was a teenager, but even then I didn't want to approach bass as if it were a guitar. We were a three-piece to begin with, and with my singing I really wanted things to play off each other. These days I think much more as a composer than wanting to be technically flashy. It's easy to be flashy when you've been playing for 30 years or more, but you don't want to. It's like being louder doesn't make you better: being busier doesn't make the bass more noticeable. It's about whatever works for the song: that's what you want to go for. There you go: it's pretty straightforward!"

Talking Heads were known for their experimental approach to pop music, with a melting-pot of influences leading to their success. Was jazz fusion ever among those influences, I wonder? "I had a really good friend called Alex Sadkin, an engineer for Grace Jones and others, who used to room with Jaco Pastorius," Tina remembers. "They lived in Florida and Alex told me that Jaco would get up in the morning, just wearing shorts because it was so hot, and he'd have his guitar on while he was making coffee and scrambling eggs! He'd practise and practise, constantly. But I didn't know Jaco: by the time I got to New York he was really wasted, and his thing was to jump on stage uninvited and walk all over everybody. That's not the Jaco I would like to remember."

"But I'm not into jazz fusion anyway – I hate it," she adds. "I find it repulsive as a musical genre. It got worse and worse. I think it's great to approach things very fresh, but I just don't think it's interesting when things are in 7/4 time. Sometimes it works, sometimes it's a car wreck."

This less-is-more approach also applies to Tina's bass gear, among which is that rare thing, a previously fretless bass. "I had a fretless," she recalls, "but I had the frets put back in because I didn't think it made any sense. I think it makes complete sense when it's a double bass, for classical music, and I do a lot of glissandos, so it would make sense for that, but I don't see any point in it any more than the five-string basses I have, which I don't play. It's nice to have that low B, but I discovered the Hipshot detuner, which is better. Again, less is more: I have all these pedals but I don't use them, or very rarely anyway, because it's just more things that can go wrong. I've heard some great young bass players who use pedals, and I'm thrilled with what they do. They're fantastic, but for my band's purposes it's not what I'm out to do. I'm not out there to impress you, I'm out there to woo you in a completely different way."

Finally, has Tina improved as a bass player over the years? "I hope so!" she chuckles, before adding: "That's one of those subjective analyses. You have to ask, 'Can I analyse myself?' I hope I have. I think that I have. I definitely play more fluidly than I did when I was 24 or 25. I'm much more relaxed these days, and I understand that it's important to get my sleep the night before than to practise. I just know certain things now. I used to be really super-uptight and suffer tremendous anxiety – and I'm much better about that now."

Info: www.tomtomclub.net

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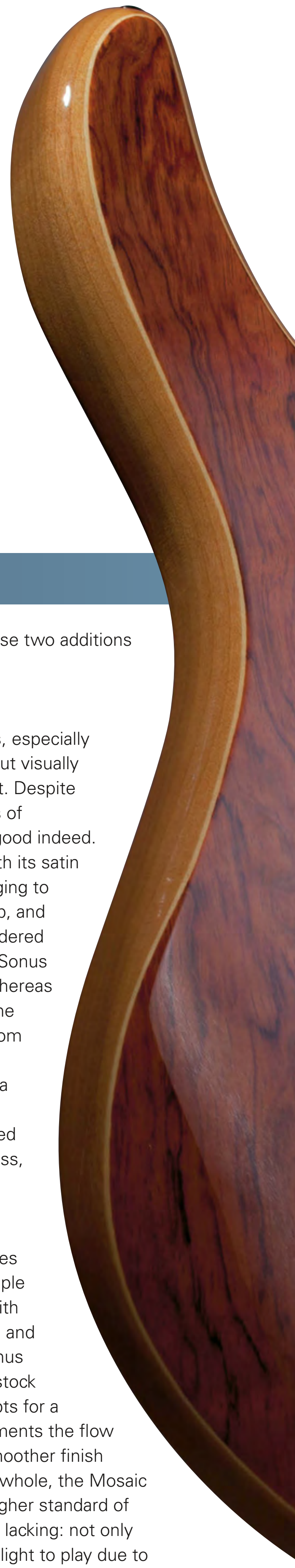
ZON
Mosaic Standard and Sonus Standard



A PAIR OF ZON BASSES FROM THE FAR EAST? YES, YOU READ THAT RIGHT. BUT DO THIS PAIR OF ORIENTALS HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO STAND ALONGSIDE THEIR US BIG BROTHERS? MIKE BROOKS FINDS OUT

Zon basses are held in high regard, and with good reason. Their level of quality and craftsmanship is second to none, and a number of big names are happy to be associated with Joe Zon's instruments. Yet Zon are one of the most recent additions to the list of manufacturers keen to offer a product from the east that matches the high standards of their US workshop instruments, but at a significantly lower price. Here at *BGM*, we have reviewed many a Zon bass over the past 12 years, so how do these two additions to the roster fare?

BUILD QUALITY

Both basses share similar qualities and features, especially in the hardware and electronics departments, but visually and aesthetically both basses are quite different. Despite originating in Korea, the level of quality in terms of construction and set-up is, on the whole, very good indeed.

The Sonus body shape should be familiar, with its satin finished, rounded curves and bevelled body edging to show off the pleasing burl maple top, and the lower cutaway offering unhindered access to the upper frets. The Sonus utilises a maple body core whereas the Mosaic uses alder, but the Mosaic steals the points from the Sonus with its gloss-finished, figured bubinga top adorning a more standard Jazz-influenced body shape. Nevertheless, the striking body timbers have been well chosen.

The neck construction is virtually identical, with both basses fitted with four-bolt, 24-fret maple and rosewood necks, both with pearl fretmarkers, satin finish and PLEK machined frets. The Sonus features a standard Zon headstock design whereas the Mosaic opts for a more curvy shape that complements the flow of the body. The Mosaic neck has a smoother finish and is blessed with a great setup: on the whole, the Mosaic feels the better of the two models with a higher standard of finish. But that's not to say that the Sonus is lacking: not only is it supremely comfortable to wear, it's a delight to play due to a fantastic set-up. Its neck profile and depth, coupled with the 19mm string spacing, combine to make it a highly playable bass. The only downside is that the undersides of the frets are slightly

CONTACT DETAILS

Bass Gear
www.bassgear.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ZON MOSAIC STANDARD
PRICE | £1000
MADE IN | Korea
BODY | One-piece alder with bubinga top
COLOUR | Natural
NECK | Three-piece maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on, four bolt
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
SCALE LENGTH | 34"
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Zon enclosed gear tuners, Schaller-style
PICKUPS | 2 Seymour Duncan Basslines Humbuckers
ELECTRONICS | 9V active/passive, 3-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, 3-band EQ (bass/middle/treble boost/cut), active/passive switch
Bridge Hipshot bridge, two-way adjustable
NUT WIDTH | 39.6mm
WEIGHT | 4kg
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Great feel and amazing playability with a sound that makes you want to play.
MINUS | Just lacks the extra bite for a killer slap tone, lacks a really glassy top end.
OVERALL | A very impressive bass for the price: an all-rounder with a spring in its step. Well worth checking out.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ZON SONUS STANDARD
PRICE | £950
MADE IN | Korea
BODY | Maple with burl maple top
COLOUR | Natural
NECK | Three-piece maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on, four bolt
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
SCALE | Length 34"
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Zon enclosed gear tuners, Schaller-style
PICKUPS | 2 Seymour Duncan Basslines Humbuckers
ELECTRONICS | 9V active/passive, 3-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, 3-band EQ (bass/treble (stacked), middle boost/cut), active/passive switch
BRIDGE | Hipshot bridge, two-way adjustable
NUT WIDTH | 39.6mm
WEIGHT | 4.1kg
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

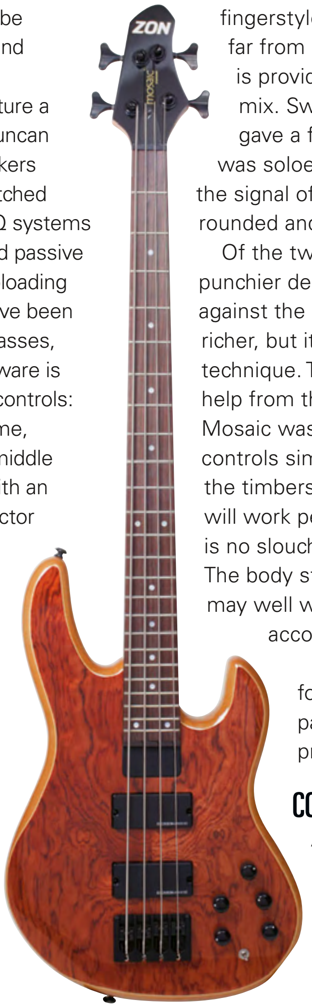
PLUS | Well constructed, comfortable and highly playable. Well worthy of the Zon name.
MINUS | Lacking the X Factor to make it stand out but still a very decent instrument.
OVERALL | Worth investigating at this price, a solid performer.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

rough, but this can be sorted out quickly and easily.

Both basses feature a pair of Seymour Duncan Basslines Humbuckers and have been matched with three-band EQ systems that offer active and passive flexibility. Black toploading Hipshot bridges have been installed on both basses, and the black hardware is completed by the controls: these feature volume, pickup pan, bass, middle and treble along with an active/passive selector switch. A quick peek inside both control cavities shows everything to be neat and tidy with all the cabling tied back.



PLAYABILITY AND SOUNDS

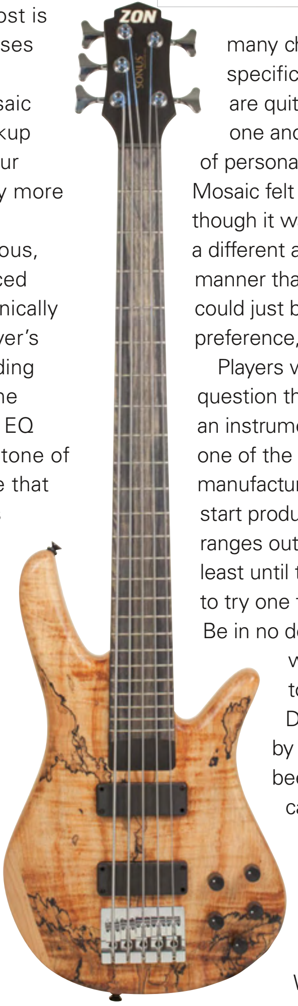
Acoustically, the basses differ quite noticeably. Both neck pockets are tight and sturdy, yet the Sonus has a more restrained fundamental tone compared to the Mosaic. However, it still has a bright response with an evident 'bounce' or 'spring', probably due to bolt-on construction. The Mosaic exhibits a throatier natural tone with even more spring in its step: no doubt its bubinga top is contributing to this.

When plugged in, both basses display very woody tonal characters. Neither bass demonstrates an obvious amount of glassy top end, even with the treble EQ at maximum and added mid EQ. This isn't a negative point, unless of course that is what you are looking for tonally: it simply means that the low and midrange response are the real areas of focus for both basses. Thankfully, neither bass is lacking in either department.

The circuit in both basses is powerful. Boosting the bass frequencies gives the bottom end more power, but the mid-boost is the real ace in the pack and has been set perfectly to give the player a versatile mid-frequency: this is a useful boost for fingerstyle playing. As mentioned, the treble boost is far from extreme, but what it does for both basses is provide extra clarity to cut through in a band mix. Switching back to passive mode, the Mosaic gave a far honkier display when the bridge pickup was soloed, and without the EQ controls to colour the signal of each bass, the Sonus sounded slightly more rounded and refined.

Of the two basses, the Mosaic has a more raucous, punchier delivery and stands out tonally when placed against the Sonus. Not only is it livelier and harmonically richer, but it also feels more responsive to the player's technique. The Sonus gave the impression of needing help from the EQ to make it stand out, whereas the Mosaic was prominent from the outset: using the EQ controls simply highlighted the basically excellent tone of the timbers. However, if you prefer a rounder tone that will work perfectly in any band context, the Sonus is no slouch and performs very well indeed. The body styling and overall feel of the Sonus may well work in its favour, as the neck is very accommodating and comfortable.

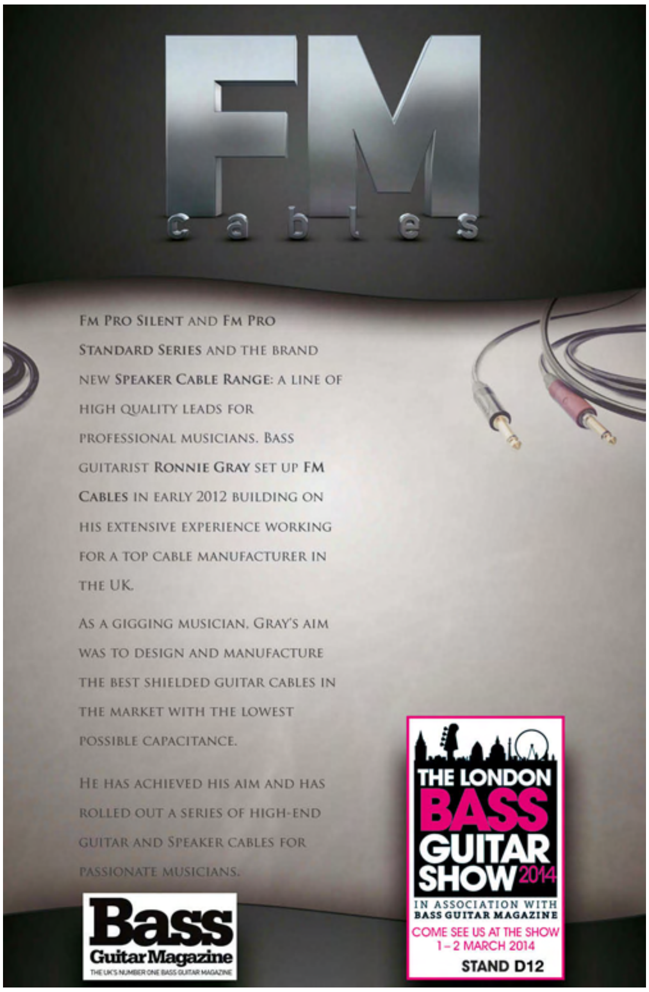
Both basses weigh in around the four-kilogramme mark, so they aren't particularly weighty beasts. Back pain promoters they aren't!



CONCLUSIONS

At around the £1000 mark, there really is serious competition for your folding stuff, so any bass has to stand out. Irrespective of the Zon brand name, these are excellent basses, but despite sharing many characteristics and specification details, they are quite different from one another. In terms of personal preference, the Mosaic felt and sounded as though it was able to sing in a different and more pleasing manner than the Sonus. That could just be my personal preference, of course.

Players will always question the quality of an instrument made by one of the US-based bass manufacturers when they start producing product ranges outside of the US, at least until they actually get to try one for themselves. Be in no doubt, these are worthy additions to the Zon range. Don't be fooled by where they have been made – they can certainly stand up for themselves. Give them a try and you might be surprised. We were.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VINTAGE V80 and V90

BUDGET BASSES NEED TO BE GOOD THESE DAYS: WHY SETTLE FOR ANYTHING LESS?JOEL MCIVER REVIEWS TWO ENTRY-LEVEL BASSES AND ASKS IF 2014 WILL BE ANOTHER VINTAGE YEAR

It's a great time for buyers of budget bass guitars. In recent years, the build quality of entry-level instruments has gone steadily in the right direction, while retail prices have held relatively steady. Sure, you'll see the occasional too-good-to-be-true bargain, especially in the darker regions of eBay: if you happen to land upon a Chinese six-string fretless for £110, you can assume that it probably isn't much fun to play. Stick to a more

sensible outlay, say around the £300 mark, and there are plenty of basses around which will get you way more bang for your buck than most of us would ever expect. Will these two Vintage basses, part of the JHS-owned brand's Reissued series, find a place in this esteemed company? Plug 'em in and let's see...

BUILD QUALITY

We love affordable gear round these parts, but we're picky about manufacturing standards too, and build flaws rarely get past our eagle eyes. We gave these two Vietnamese-built basses – whose combined retail price would just about get you a second-hand Fender of dubious provenance – a serious going over, and cub's honour, we couldn't find a darn thing wrong with either of them. Obviously the hardware isn't going to be super-heavyweight at this price point, and the lifespan of the components won't be proven until a few years of solid usage have passed – but these brand new basses look and feel solidly built throughout. In the bad old days (say 1987), you could spot a cheapo bass miles away because the screws didn't fit very well and the fret ends would have your finger off in a jiffy – not to mention the crappy tuners, demonically high action and ropey finish. Nowadays, though, we wouldn't expect any of those flaws, and none of them are to be found on the Vintages we have here.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The V80, £50 cheaper than its big brother, is first up, and on plugging the beast in we're pleasantly surprised. When you play any bass with a three-figure pricetag beginning with the number 2, you don't expect much more than a reasonably playable instrument, but the V80 has much more to offer than that. Its cunning single pickup can be beefed up by the Wilkinson 'roll control', which may sound like an aid for assembling home-made cigarettes but actually refers to the ability to switch from a single to a double coil sound. Apply

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

VINTAGE V80
PRICE | £279
MADE IN | Vietnam
BODY | Basswood
FINISH | Black, amber
NECK | Maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
SCALE | 34"
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Wilkinson WJB750
PICKUPS | 1 Wilkinson WJMB-B
CONTROLS | Volume, tone, roll control
BRIDGE | Wilkinson Adjustable WBBC
HARDWARE | Chrome
WEIGHT | 3.45kg
LEFT HAND VERSION AVAILABLE? | No
CASE OR GIG BAG INCLUDED? | No

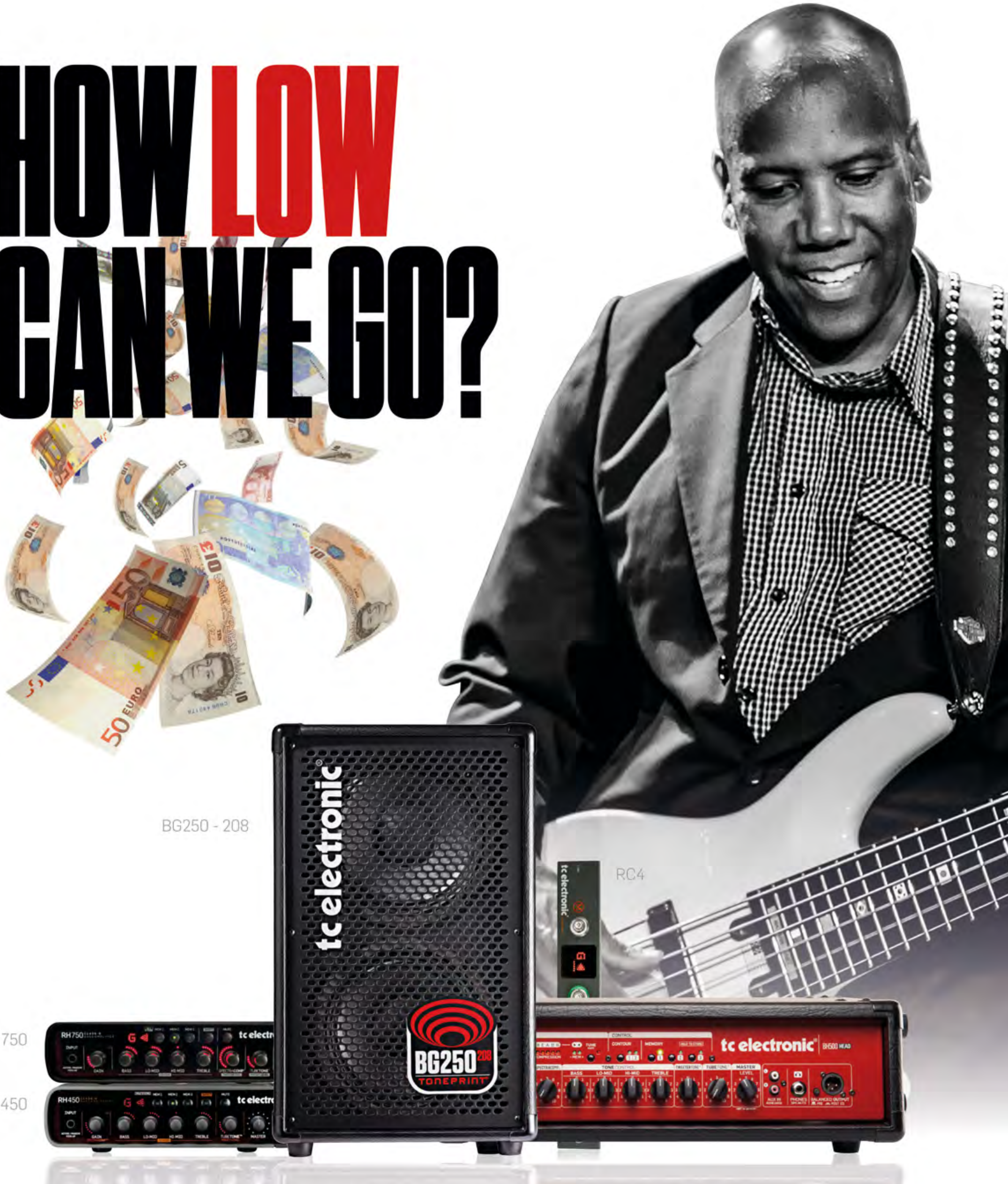
WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Bags of spec for the money.
MINUS | Tone range useful but not awe-inspiring; slightly odd 24th fret.
OVERALL | Excellent starter/backup bass.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★★★

HOW LOW CAN WE GO?



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this control and you'll notice a significantly 'bigger' sound emanating from the pickup unit. Tweak this further with your tone pot and the V80 can be relied upon to supply a useful range of sounds. Sure, there's neither earth-shattering bass nor glass-shattering top end available, but that's not what anyone should expect at this price point. Instead, we have a perfectly decent bass that punches above its weight when diverse tone requirements come calling. Its Jazz-y neck profile means that your fingers will have a fairly easy job of whipping up and down the frets.

If you happen to have the extra half-ton to invest in the V90, we strongly suggest you do so. This bass is a step up from the V80, at least when it comes to tone. Like the cheaper instrument, it is a playable, well-made bass, but its extra pickup adds tons of range to the tones. Here, the roll control comes into its own, adding significant boost to the output. In fact, turn everything to 11 and you're rewarded with a truly mighty slap and pick tone that has no business belonging to a sub-£400 bass.

Just one slight criticism, and readers may well disagree with this. Both necks finish with a 24th fret that covers only the D and G string. Because of the body shape, access to this fret isn't quite as easy as we'd like, and although we're sure Vintage have solid reasons for designing the neck this way, we can't imagine what it might be. Still, this is a minor complaint.

CONCLUSION

Well, beat us with a stick and call us Mary. We have two excellent bass guitars here, both for a wallet-friendly price and resolutely refusing to irritate us in any way, despite hours and days of constant playing. Buy with complete confidence, we say, bearing in mind that you get what you pay for and thus that the V90 outdoes the V80 with ease. Either will serve you well, we reckon, and are probably best considered as backup or beginner basses – without any of the stigma that those terms often imply. Well done, Vintage.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

VINTAGE V90
PRICE | £329
MADE IN | Vietnam
BODY | Basswood
FINISH | Red, white
NECK | Maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
SCALE | 34"
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Wilkinson WJB750
PICKUPS | 2 Wilkinson WJMB-N, WJMB-B (Live)
CONTROLS | 2 volume, tone, roll control
BRIDGE | Wilkinson Adjustable WBBC
HARDWARE | Chrome
WEIGHT | 3.45kg
LEFT HAND VERSION AVAILABLE? | No
CASE OR GIG BAG INCLUDED? | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Like its cheaper sibling, amazing features at this price point; full-throated pick/slap tone.
MINUS | At this price, no quibbles from us, although 24th fret is a little wacky.
OVERALL | One of the best basses in this price bracket in literally years.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	8/10 stars
SOUND QUALITY	9/10 stars
VALUE	10/10 stars

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JOEL MCIVER PUTS JEFF BERLIN'S NEW SIGNATURE CORT THROUGH ITS PACES. THUMBS ALOFT!

CONTACT DETAILS

Proel (International) Ltd
www.proel.co.uk

No, we don't know what 'Rithimic' means either, but let's not sweat the small stuff. Having witnessed *BGM* contributor and all-round bass legend Jeff Berlin in action many times and having gained a keen awareness of the great man's style and gear preferences, we're keen to give his new Cort a try-out, whatever its name. At £799 it comes at a surprisingly low price point for a bassist of Jeff's calibre; most signature bass guitars come in too-cheap and too-expensive versions, so it'll be interesting to gauge the playability of a bass which occupies that sweet spot in the middle. Let's have it!

BUILD QUALITY

Lift the Rithimic out of its case and that red and gold finish fair frazzles your eyeballs. It's pretty spectacular, and while we rather like it here at *BGM's* secret rural lair, bassists with different tastes may not agree. It also comes loaded with gold bling in the form of the bridge, controls and tuners, which we think look pretty amazing, but again, who are we to judge? You may think red, gold and, er, more gold is just vulgar. We'll have to agree to disagree.

However, we think everyone will agree on the actual mechanical quality of the Rithimic. With a body top made of seriously beautiful woods – spalted maple and padouk, yum! – and glossed to the finest possible level, this bass demands that you give it a stroke. The controls turn firmly and smoothly, with that essential centre detente which is so useful that we wonder why all luthiers don't employ it. The Hipshot machine heads operate in that nice non-jerky way that expensive hardware tends to provide, while the tank-like Babicz bridge is a thing of

industrial precision. Run a finger along the fret edges and you won't feel a single edge. No arguments here: the Rithimic is made to the highest standards.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

Jeff is famous for his preference for simplicity, playing four-string passive basses without the usual dozens of controls that high-spec instruments so often offer. This makes the Rithimic a straightforward review item: dial up a few tones, explore the range and you're left with the job at hand – actually playing it.

The neck shape and finish are firmly in the middle of the usual parameters: not too glossy but not actually frictionless, slim in profile but not overly shreddy, with plenty of access to the 21 frets (Two octaves? Be off with you!) at the dusty end – not that it'll remain dusty for long if you play anything like Jeff does.

Cort have given the Rithimic a simple volume/tone/balance control configuration which comes as a breath of fresh air to us, having spent years playing basses with a million knobs and switches.

For a change, let's start by rolling off all the top end and seeing what the Cort can deliver. Depending on the pickup balance of course, you're provided with a subtle, woody tone that is perfect for fingerstyle and is not remotely muddy or 'hidden'. Allow the top end to breathe a bit, with a tweak of the tone control towards that central detente, and you enter more extravagant territory, with a touch of honk coming into the sound. Whack the treble right up and the Rithimic gives you a crisp, front and centre tone that rewards pick and slap playing. As a passive instrument, it doesn't supply that glassy, zingy, ear-bleeding, smashed-crockery sound that some players like, so be warned if that's what you're after. Instead, the Cort gives you a respectable amount of trebly zing and no more.

However, this doesn't detract a jot from the fun you'll have playing it with its maximum top end dialled in. The Rithimic pretty much demands that you give it a slap, hitting back at your thumb and finger-pops with enthusiasm. Its overall tone is definitely biased towards the honk, so slappers will have a field day with it. Fingerstyle is a joy too.

CONCLUSION

It's easy to recommend the Rithimic. Eminently playable and boasting the full range of tones – unless, as we saw, your preferred sound is super, super trebly – this bass does its job with great panache at a surprisingly affordable price. Packed with quality and making the art of bass easier for anyone in need of a sympathetic instrument, this is one of the friendliest instruments we've tackled in ages.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £799
MADE IN | Indonesia
BODY | Alder, spalted maple and padouk top
FINISH | Rithimic Natural
NECK | Maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on
SCALE | 34"
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 21
TUNERS | Hipshot Ultralight
PICKUPS | 2 x Bartolini Jeff Berlin Custom Soapbar Dual Coil Humbuckers
CONTROLS | Volume, tone, balance
BRIDGE | Babicz FCH4
WEIGHT | 3.9kg
LEFT-HAND VERSION AVAILABLE? | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Unputdownable! The Rithimic will make you feel twice as good a bassist as you actually are.
MINUS | The body finish might not be for everyone; not great for super-trebly sounds.
OVERALL | For 800 quid, you'll have a tough job finding a better bass.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★★★★★☆

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TC ELECTRONIC

BG250-208 and BG250-210

IS IT TIME TO WHEEL OUT THAT OLD 'THEY CALL HIM TC' GAG AGAIN? WHY YES IT IS! KEV SANDERS FEELS THE DANISH DEDICATION

TC Electronic of Denmark has been in the amp and effects business since 1985, and in 2002, became TC Group when they acquired the company that owned Tannoy and Goodmans. In recent years, they've become known for their TonePrint effect system, which allowed the user to download, by increasingly cunning means, a range of effects for their BG250 bass amp series. Now, they're updating that very successful series of relatively little amps, and we've been lucky enough to get two examples.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

What we've been sent is a 208, which – as the name might suggest – has 2x8" speakers, and a 210, with (duh) a 2x10" set-up, but though these are very different amps in concept, they share a great deal. There's family styling for a start; both are in monolithic slap-sided closed back cabinets, with bright red control panels mounted at the back, in a way that suggests you'd better like standing up if you also like seeing your control panel.

The sizes, however, are different enough that you feel like Father Ted explaining to Father Dougal that this amp

CONTACT DETAILS

TC Electronic
www.tcelectronic.com

is small, but that other one is far away. The 208 is clearly designed as a practice amp: it's dinky, light, portable, and TC has scrimped a little on the features to make everything fit on the control panel. Here, we have a jack input with a pad control and a three-band EQ. TC voices the cut and boost functions of each band differently – with the mid cutting at 500Hz and boosting at 800Hz, for instance – and indeed voices them differently for each of the amps, which suggests they're really paying attention to tone here. There's also a TonePrint control, a tuner, and a master volume with a mute switch – and that's your lot. There is a little more to be found on the back panel, in the shape of headphone out, aux in, a balanced output and a socket for a footswitch, but they are out of sight, if not out of mind.

Interestingly for a unit with downloadable effects, there's no USB to connect your computer: if you want to update either of the two TonePrint slots on the smaller amp, you need a cunning smartphone app. The app, available for Android or iOS, allows you to access a large library of flange, chorus, vibrato, octaver, compression and drive effects, which are transferred to the amp in a most unusual way. You turn on the amp, turn up the volume on your bass, and also on your phone, and then hold the phone next to your bass pickup while it makes a noise like a ZX Spectrum loading up *Manic Miner*. This is picked up by the bass and transferred to the unit. The 208, like the 210, has two different TonePrint slots, but on the smaller amp there's only one control, so if you want to select the other slot, you have to buy the footswitch.

The larger amp is very similarly equipped, but adds a gain control and clipping LED, and has separate controls for the two TonePrint slots, though disappointingly you can't use both of them together – it's one or the other. For those of little faith who think the smartphone app sounds questionable, the

210 also gives you USB access for updating those TonePrints.

Neither amp is going to set the world on fire looks-wise, but they're rugged and robust, and once you're standing over them, they're easy enough to use.

SOUNDS

So what are they like in use? Tonally, they're pretty good: we started with a J-style bass into the little 208, and we were impressed. This is a small amp. It's easy to carry and unobtrusive enough for your front room, but it's pretty loud and it certainly packs a punch. The 8" speakers emphasise the midtones nicely, and we would expect that this amp could cut through in a rehearsal or a smaller live setting just as much as in the front room.

Between the well-voiced EQ and the active preamp on the bass, we were able to get

most of the tones we might want, from a burbling Jaco-esque tone to an in-your-face slap.

It has to be said that if you really want bottom end to set your curtains flapping, the small speakers won't give you quite the response you want, but if you need to take your amp on the bus, it's a sacrifice worth making.

Messing around with the TonePrint effects, we were more taken with the compressor and drive effects than the flanging and chorus stuff. Don't expect this to sound like a tube amp, no matter which drive you choose, but the dirty tones are quite pleasing, and for the player stepping up from a starter amp, the flexibility of effects might be a big draw. We did wonder whether the many octaver effects were really going to appeal to a wide audience, but at least with TonePrint, you can employ what suits you and ignore the rest.

The 210, not surprisingly, has a slightly heavier tone at the low end, but we're still only talking 10 inches here, so don't expect to sound like King Tubby. Interestingly, the 210 is slightly less friendly to being pushed really hard: perhaps it's the larger speaker losing its composure. Still, there's still plenty of useable tone. The two TonePrint slots are nice to have, but the fact that you can't use them together means that slot 2 essentially just saves you some time on swapping; how many players would like to be able to use a drive effect and a compressor together? It's also worth noting is that this is not a small amp. The 208 is definitely public-transportable, but the 210 is a real shoulder-bender, verging on the size where wheels would be appreciated.

CONCLUSION

These amps fall between two stools. Make them £300 or so, and they'd look very tempting to younger, newer players looking to upgrade from their first practice amp. At the price point they actually occupy, they're still quite a persuasive offering, but not one that's completely compelling. The 208 is really good for such a compact amp, and that might be enough in itself, but the 210, with its much larger footprint, might face a tougher time in the market. It is undeniably, however, worth a try.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TC ELECTRONIC BG250-208
PRICE | £425
POWER | 250 Watts
SPEAKERS | 2x8"
FEATURES | 3-band EQ, TonePrint FX slot, DI out, aux in, master volume, built-in tuner

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Lots of tone and punch in a tiny package.
MINUS | Expensive, on a price-per-square-inch basis.
OVERALL | For such a portable amp, it's excellent.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★☆☆☆

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TC ELECTRONIC BG250-210
PRICE | £469
POWER | 250 Watts
SPEAKERS | 2x10"
FEATURES | 3-band EQ, 2 TonePrint FX slots, DI out, aux in, master volume, built-in tuner

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Nice full tone, choice of effects.
MINUS | Frustrating not to be able to use both effects at once.
OVERALL | Good, solid amp, rather than a standout.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★☆☆☆

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Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. So we continue to push electronics and bass amps under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

CHRIS HANBY @CHanbyEFX

VERSATONE PAN-O-FLEX 120

THIS MONTH CHRIS SALUTES THE VENERABLE VERSATONE PAN-O-FLEX 120. GOOD LUCK FINDING ONE...

A bit of a history lesson for you this month. Cast your mind back to the mid-1960s, when most American studio bassists were either going directly into the mixing desk or using the industry standard Ampeg B-15N Portaflex. West Coast musicians, however, had another option – and one that was quite an oddball. It incorporated several different technologies that we now find included in many modern bass amplifiers. If you want to know the secret of the LA sound, then look no further than the Versatone Pan-O-Flex.

The Versatone Company was based in Van Nuys, California and was set up by inventor G. Robert Hall and his wife in the early 60s. Very little is known about the start and finish dates of the company, or the range of products they offered. All we do know is that the company name is still owned by Hall's wife, Loretta. The Pan-O-Flex design appears to have been a collaboration between Hall and engineer Jack Cookerly. It is also believed that it was devised for use as an accordion amplifier, as both Cookerly and Hall's wife played the instrument. I suspect that on hearing the improved separation offered by the Pan-O-Flex's bi-amped preamp, guitar and bass players jumped on the chance to improve their tone. Cookerly went on to become chief engineer at Lowrey organs, as well as having a successful career as a composer, songwriter and arranger.

While Versatone did make other models of amplifier, the Pan-O-Flex was revered by many session musicians for its exceptional clarity of sound. It was a 30-watt amp with an unusual bi-amp system, the first ever seen in production bass amplification. There were two different models: guitar and bass. The guitar model featured both 12" and 8" speakers; the higher frequencies were sent via a primitive crossover to the 8" and the bass frequencies to the 12". You could blend between the two different speakers using a balance pot. The '120' bass model used a similar preamp, but the blended signal was sent to a single 12" speaker. This was a giant leap in thinking behind amplification and was massively ahead of its time, particularly in a small combo. The speakers used in the Pan-O-Flex were made by Utah and were a significant part of the sound. The Pan-O-Flex also had an unusual valve arrangement, using 7591 valves rather than the usual 6L6s that many other manufacturers had opted for. The Pan-O-Flex also used an innovative baffling system to enhance its articulation.

Studio ace Carol Kaye used the Pan-O-Flex for most of her recording sessions from the mid 60s to the late 70s. She owned four in total: one for use at home and the other three at various studios for her to record with. On her Facebook page, she writes: "It was a great little clean studio amp I used, and it was miked most of the time well into the 70s for all my studio work and some club dates, even. They did start to take me half and half, though, probably about 1968-69, half DI and half miked in the regular record studios, but always miked in the film studios... it was quiet, didn't have much power, but you don't need power in studio work but quiet clean sounds." Kaye famously used the Pan-O-Flex on many Beach Boys recordings, including the classic 'Good Vibrations'. (As I understand it, Kaye used the two-speaker version of the Pan-O-Flex, although it wasn't technically a bass model.)

The other well-documented exponent of the Pan-O-Flex was Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna bassist Jack Casady. He used the 1x12 version as a preamp. By driving the Pan-O-Flex's preamp he discovered a warm overdrive with distinctive compression, which soon became his signature sound.

These amplifiers were made in such small numbers that accurate information on them is scarce. However, I have managed to piece together what I can in order to offer you what is hopefully an interesting insight. Obviously, original examples are like the proverbial hen's teeth, so if you're lucky enough to find one, the price is likely to be very high.

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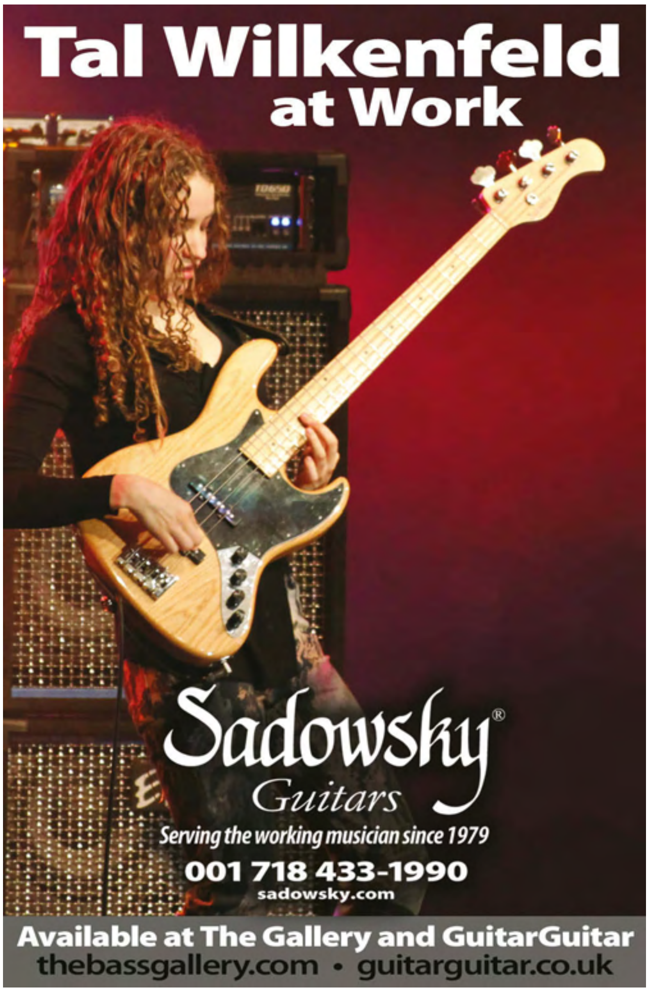

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THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz guru Ruth hails two killer bass players

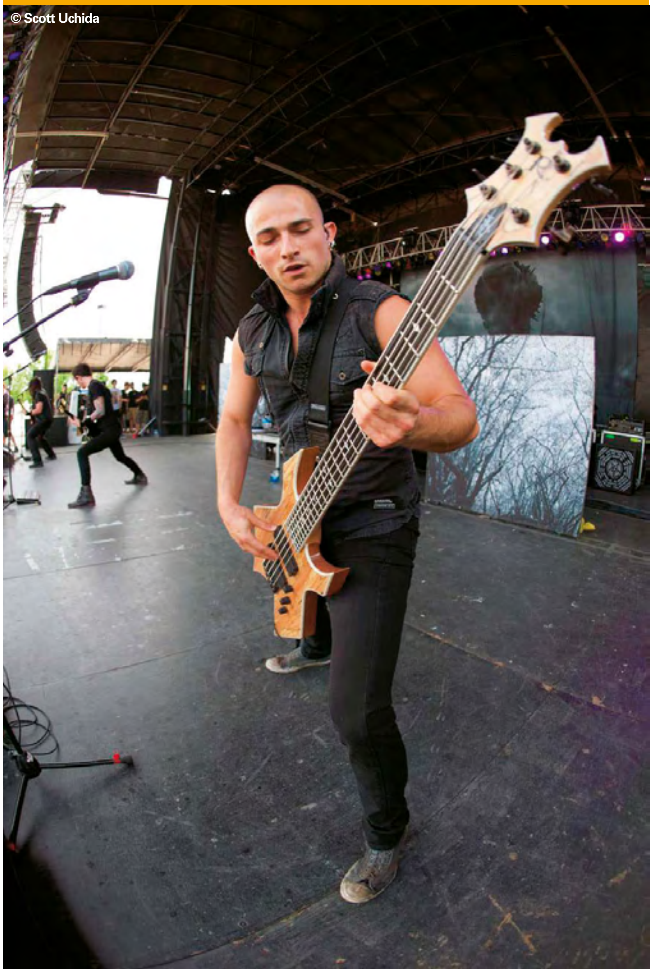
It's great to be a bass player in this country. The amount of amazing bands that come from the UK and play here regularly is astonishing. When I go out and see a good band, I always feel so excited and inspired. Of course, by practising and playing gigs you become a better musician, but you must also be inspired by the things that surround you. For me, live music in this country is truly inspirational. I saw two amazing British bands recently: one called Shiver, from Leeds, and another from London, called Polar Bear. The former is an instrumental trio, led by guitarist Chris Sharkey, who really blew my mind. Their approach to instrumental music felt so fresh and thoughtful. They were using several effects pedals and both electronic and acoustic drums, and they sounded like a really strong unit: powerful and raw, as only a trio can be, but as versatile as a whole orchestra. Their bass player Andy Champion had some really tasteful sounds and his playing was so solid and completely in control. If you haven't heard of him, he is definitively one to look out for. As for Polar Bear, for me they are one of the best bands in the UK. I love Seb Rochford's drumming and writing, and his band has developed through the years like no other. All of their albums are incredibly strong. Seeing them live is like going on a journey: you never know what to expect, even if you know all their tunes. Tom Herbert on the double bass is always a pleasure to watch and listen to. I love his warm sound and his playing is of such a high level. He supports everything around him, yet is always so creative. Thanks to groups like these, I feel so inspired about playing music and I'm really happy to see so many creative people around me. It really makes me want to practise and improve on my instrument as well as push my boundaries in every possible way. I don't want to recreate something old: I want to create something new.
soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

THE METALHEAD

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

Trivium's bassist advises on the joys of long-haul travel

Flying is one of those things that I just accept and try not to stress over. Honestly, I find the longer flights pleasant. I can watch movies, play games, and catch up on all the great books I've been meaning to read. The most stressful aspect of flying is probably checking in at the airport: in this respect, some countries are much more stressful then others. We often carry up to 27 items with us to check in... but never mind. Let me tell you about Trivium's recent trip to Australia instead! Even though it was our seventh time playing there, it never gets old. Playing the Soundwave festival is like a vacation for the bands there, and even more so for us since we only had to play the festival with no off dates. The best part about all of this off-time is eating awesome food and drinking whatever you feel like: it's a team-building exercise for the band and crew. Right now, we're in Cape Town, South Africa. In 10 years of touring, there are still frontiers like Africa that we are encountering for the first time. This is important to us: we have been afforded the honour of coming to the ends of the earth to play for our fans. We want to know about them, how they live and what they are into. I've been blown away by the diversity here; aspects of being colonised definitely still linger throughout this city. Table Mountain is a high point (literally and figuratively), Camp Bay is beautiful, Fair Winery is a paradise. There is, however, a flipside to all this, seeing the people living in shanty towns as we drive past from the airport. It reminds me how fortunate we are.
www.trivium.org



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THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy? bassist Mike revisits some classic bass parts

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Just before we hit the studio to track the new stuff we've got a short run of shows coming up. Why's that? Obviously we're going to be road-testing the new material, honing and crafting it in the live environment. Er… actually no. Although we'll play one new tune every night, the tour is to promote some deluxe reissues of two of our biggest selling and critically acclaimed albums. Regard that as a shameless plug.

To that end I've been working through the old songs and trying to get a handle on how to approach them before we start rehearsing. Most of the tracks date from 1993, so I'm having to re-learn parts written when I was 23 years old. It's crazy to listen to them now: it almost seems like I'm listening to another player. Some of the stuff I would now consider too gauche or a bit lairy, and there's a couple of obvious howlers in there.

Do you hate it when you see a band and they take liberties with the material you know and love? Personally, I don't like the source material to be tampered with too much, but in this instance these are my own parts. Is it my prerogative to try and improve them if it means changing some bits? In a way, I'm almost considering 'unlearning' some little tricks I've picked up over the years. Consider it like getting rid of a few good habits.

Of course, a lot of what I found tricky back then is much easier now. I can play the faster stuff much more easily, and even downpick entire sections – whereas then it really depended on how much coffee I'd ingested at the start of the session. It's good to hear parts and ideas that are now integral to my playing in the early stages of their development; there are chordal parts and forays into harmony and counterpoint that I've been developing since then. The overenthusiastic parts are all part of my development and I am very proud of them. As long as I keep the energy and vibe, I think I'll be doing the legacy justice.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-wielding ERB monster Stew asks the tough questions

In the last column I asked you to consider what this instrument we play is, so let's start examining. Context is everything, so what is the context in which you want to use the extended range bass? With so many octaves at our disposal, our considerations can be the same as a composer's or a concert pianist's. Will your approach be to continue to develop the bass's voice along the lines of the already established vocabulary, or are you chasing a different ghost? Is the ERB a soloist's tool for you – and if so, are you using it in a band format with traditional song forms, or are you playing alone on stage?

We have a unique opportunity in what we attempt to do. If you are writing music, are you writing only with the voice of your instrument in mind, or are you trying to create new song forms? As we aren't limited by the range of a four- or a five-string bass, we can explore new terrain sonically and compositionally. We have pipe organ lows, fife highs and techniques as diverse as slap, tap and chord melody at our disposal – and that's only on a fretted instrument.

If we choose to write music for an ensemble, how do you choose to arrange others' parts? We can tackle not only rhythm but polyrhythm, so it's possible to challenge a drummer or percussionist in new ways, allowing them to explore abstract voices on their instruments. With our seismic lows, what parts would you give to a keyboardist? Since we have a wild playground in the upper register, what kind of parts would you craft for a guitarist or guitarists? Why not write for a multiple bass group?

On the other hand, we can step away from ensembles altogether. Have you taken the stage as a solo artist? Have you attempted to play an entire set on your own? Would you consider such a thing? What about writing music that is not even meant to be performed, but recorded to fully exploit four or more octaves of fretted range?

Bear this all in mind and next month we'll look at another question likely to be laid at your feet, sisters and brothers of the extended range.

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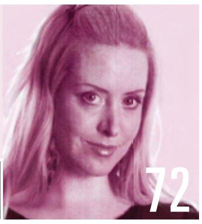
BASS TECHNIQUES

MAKING YOU A BETTER BASS PLAYER

Welcome to our redesigned techniques section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced** level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...

Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.
www.facebook.com/lowendlady



ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Alex Webster founded the frankly terrifying Cannibal Corpse in 1988 and has guested since then on musically complex projects such as Blotted Science. He is the author of the Extreme Metal Bass instruction book.

ALEX WEBSTER INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at Tech Music School.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 82

Say hello to our new advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Kev Sanders is a freelance electric and double bassist.As well as numerous BBC radio and television sessions, he's played over 4,000 live gigs. He is the head of Bass Studies at AMS.
www.kevsanders.com

KEVIN SANDERS SOUND LIKE YOUR HEROES 88

ELLEN O'REILLY

OUR NEW BEGINNER'S THEORY COLUMNIST ELLEN O'REILLY KICKS OFF WITH A NEW LOOK AT THE BASS NECK

'Music theory' and everything the phrase implies can often leave people running in fear. In my new column I aim to break down the information you'll need into easy-to-understand pieces. You'll soon find that there's nothing to be scared of!

Firstly, I want to explain why you should learn music theory. Have you ever jammed with other musicians and gotten lost as to where to go on the fretboard? Have you ever been frustrated that you couldn't play the notes you heard in your head quickly enough? Have you ever wanted to tell to other musicians what you wanted them to play but couldn't explain it well enough? These are just some of the reasons why music theory is so useful. Music is a language, and theory is the communicatior you'll need to get your playing in the conversation.

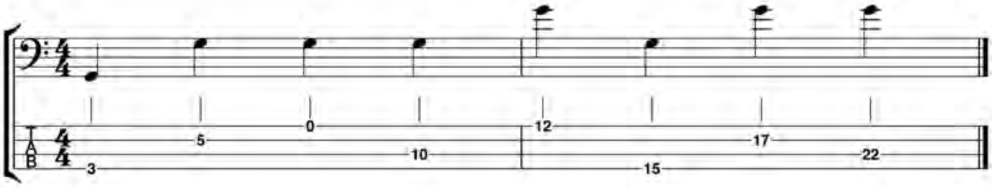
To start with, we need to make sure we know the basics. There are 12 notes in the musical alphabet. On a four-string bass in standard tuning these run E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab, A, A#/Bb, B, C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb. The notes that are written as F#/Gb have two names for the same note: a # (sharp) is one semitone above a named note and a b (flat) is one semitone below a named note. These are interchangeable depending on the context: we'll come to that in later columns.

The distances (or intervals) between the notes are known as tones and semitones. A tone is a whole step away from a particular note, and a semitone is a half step away: for example, D is a tone away from C but C# is only a semitone away from C. Sharps (#) and flats (b) are collectively known as accidentals: as you can see, there are no accidentals between E and F or B and C.

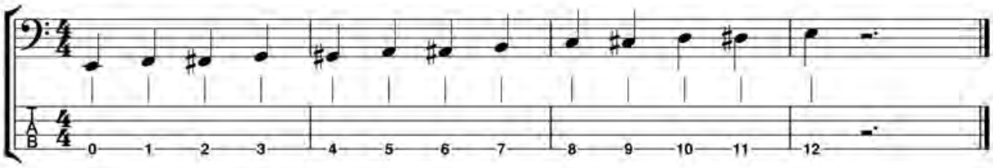
It's important to know where all these notes are located on your bass. In the following charts you can see all the notes on your fretboard up to the twelfth fret. All the notes below the twelfth fret are repeated up the neck from the twelfth fret upwards. As you can see from the charts, many notes are repeated in different places on the neck, so be sure to test yourself so that you know them all.

A good way of getting the note names into your head is to play up and down each string, reciting the note names to yourself, and then move across the entire fretboard. Good luck, low-enders!

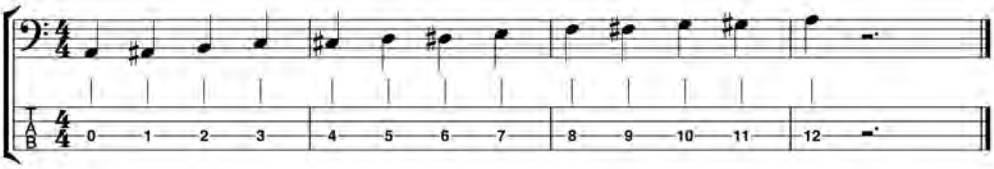
Here's an exercise to help you become more familiar with the fretboard. Choose any note (in this case G) and try to find that note in as many different places on the neck as you can. Test yourself against a metronome and increase the tempo as you become more confident. Do this with all the notes.



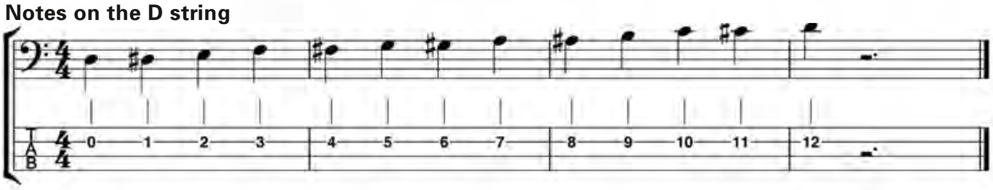
Notes on the E string



Notes on the A string



Notes on the D string



Notes on the G string

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PAUL GEARY

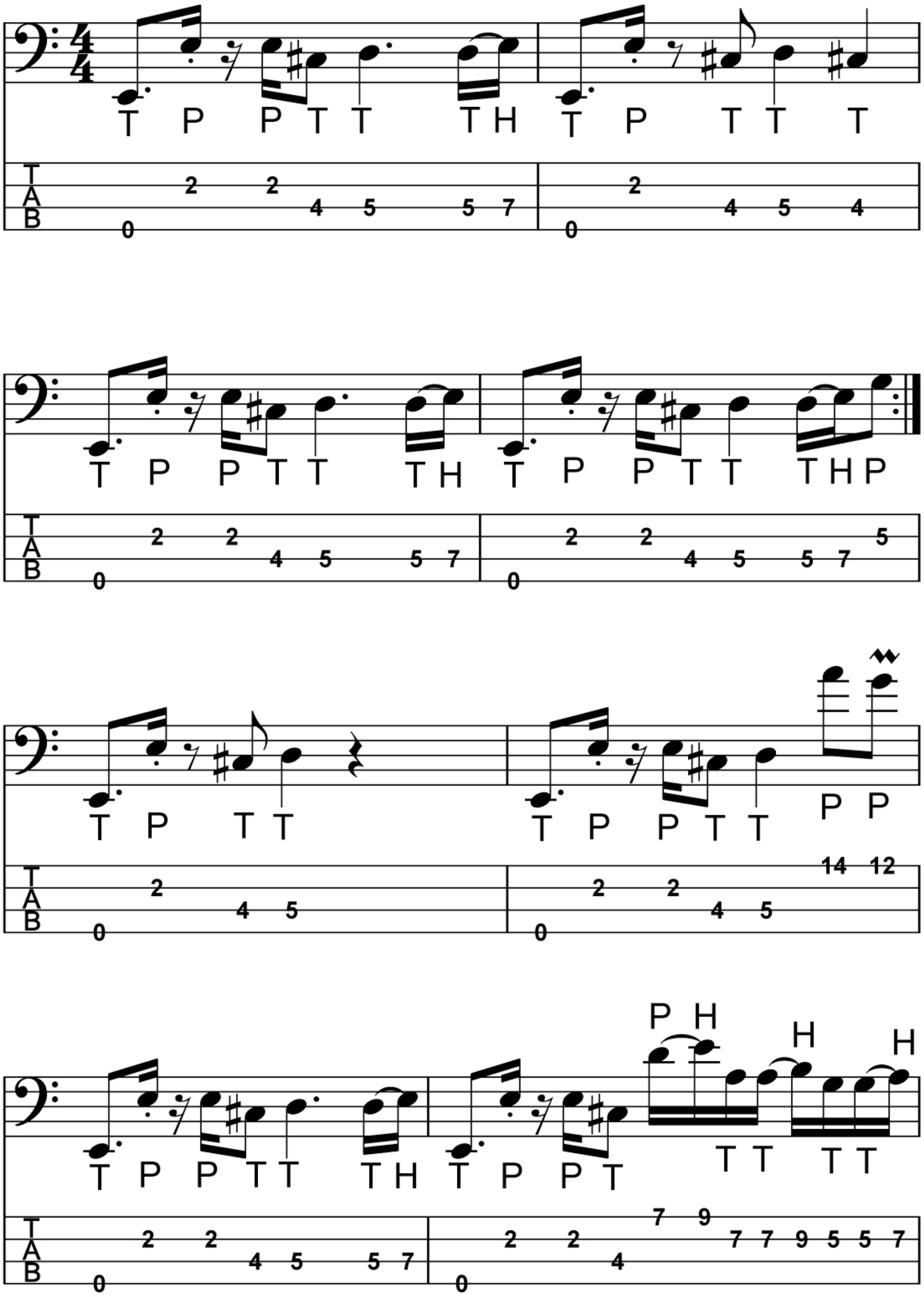
THIS MONTH GEARY GETS INTO THE GROOVE, PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF ANYONE'S BASS PLAYING...

This month I would like to incorporate some of the technique we have looked at over the last few months into a groove.

We will focus on pitch, rhythm and feel. The following example uses standard notation 'T' for thumb and 'P' for pluck, but also watch out for 'H' for hammer on.

As before, it is vital that you use a metronome or drum machine: set it at 80BPM as a starting point.

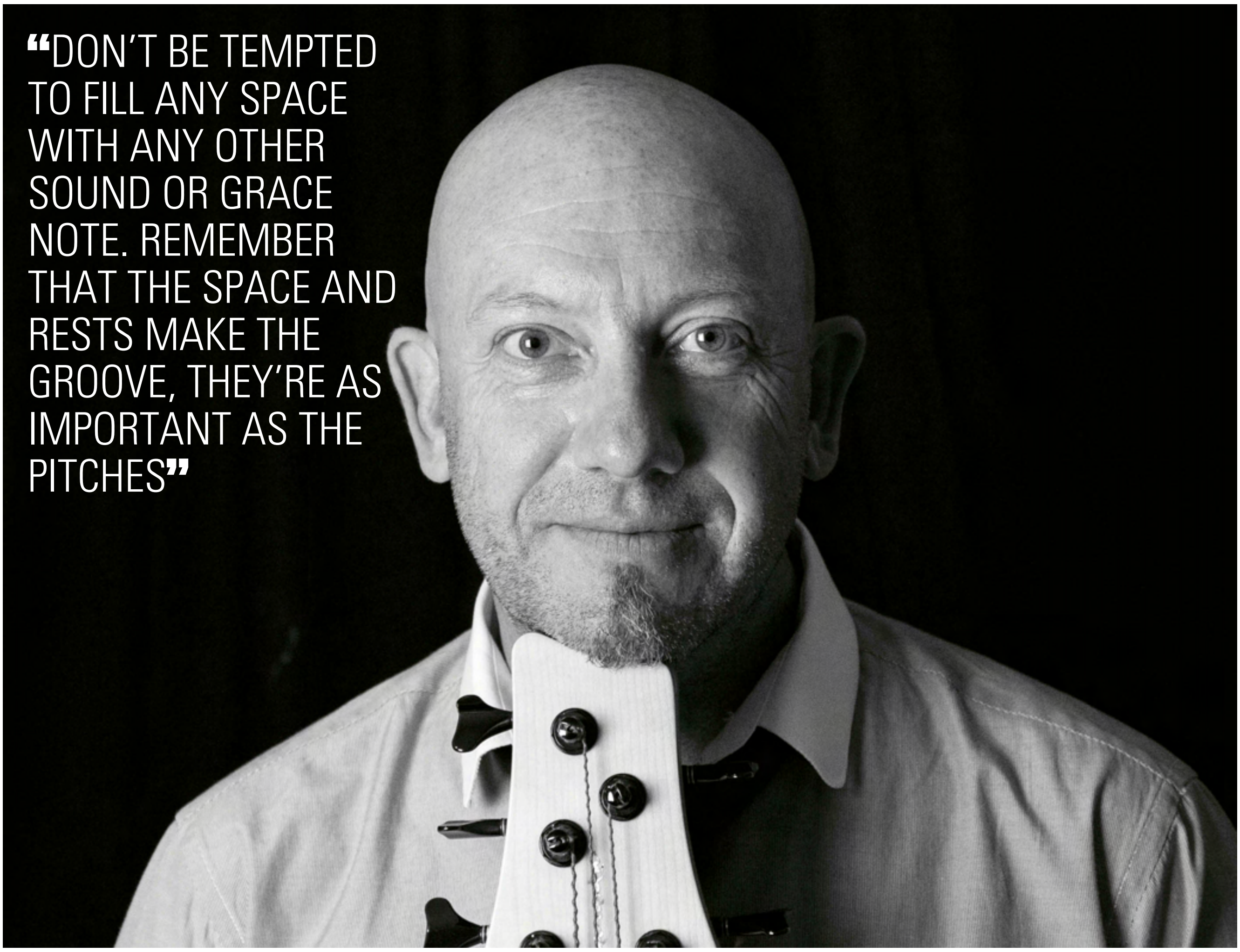
The following example is a basic slap groove in the key of E. Make sure you get a nice staccato note on the sixteenth note E octave at the beginning of each bar. Don't be tempted to fill any space with any other sound or grace note. Remember that the space and rests make the groove, they're as important as the pitches. Keep the notes even and in time. It is important to get good contact with the string on the first note open E. This sets up a groove nicely.



As we move on, I am keeping the bassline pretty much the same, adding more rhythm and pitches but still not cluttering the groove. Watch out for the hammer-on at the end of bars one to four. You need to hit the E on the 7th fret of the A string: it's a little tricky to get the right tone, so practise until it sounds just right. A good exercise is to record yourself practising. You don't need fancy gear: your phone's recorder app will do. It will give you a good idea of how you sound, and as we all know, the tape never lies!

Watch out for the plucked G on the last 8th note of the fourth bar. You could use the open string, but

Extending your tone life



"DON'T BE TEMPTED TO FILL ANY SPACE WITH ANY OTHER SOUND OR GRACE NOTE. REMEMBER THAT THE SPACE AND RESTS MAKE THE GROOVE, THEY'RE AS IMPORTANT AS THE PITCHES"

I think the G on the 5th fret of the D string sounds better, with a fatter tone. In the last bar we shoot right up to the 14th and 12th frets on the G string, with a trill on the G. Nothing wrong with a bit of cheese, eh?

Bar seven is back to the original groove and then in bar eight we add our first fill. It is based on the E minor pentatonic scale, a five-note scale. Concentrate on the combination of thumb and hammer-on. If you need to, slow this one right down until you get it under your fingers. It's one of my favourite fills and I use this one a lot. Have fun with this and I'll see you next month for part two of our slap grooves series.

ALEX WEBSTER

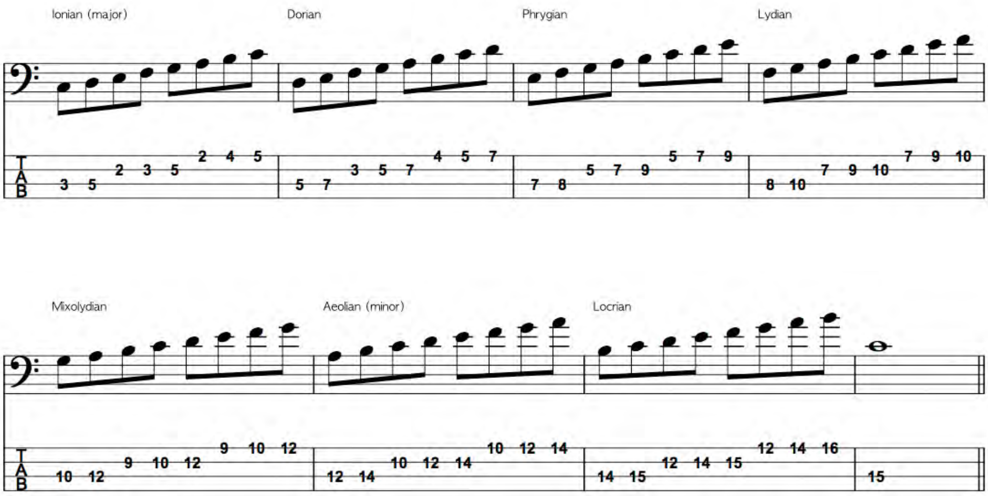
ALEX DIVES INTO THE WORLD OF MODES, BRINGING THEM INTO THE SPOTLIGHT FOR BASS PLAYERS

For the past few months we've been taking a look at different ways to practise scales, using the A natural minor scale as an example throughout. Now that you've got some new concepts to work with, let's look at different scales and modes that you can apply them to.

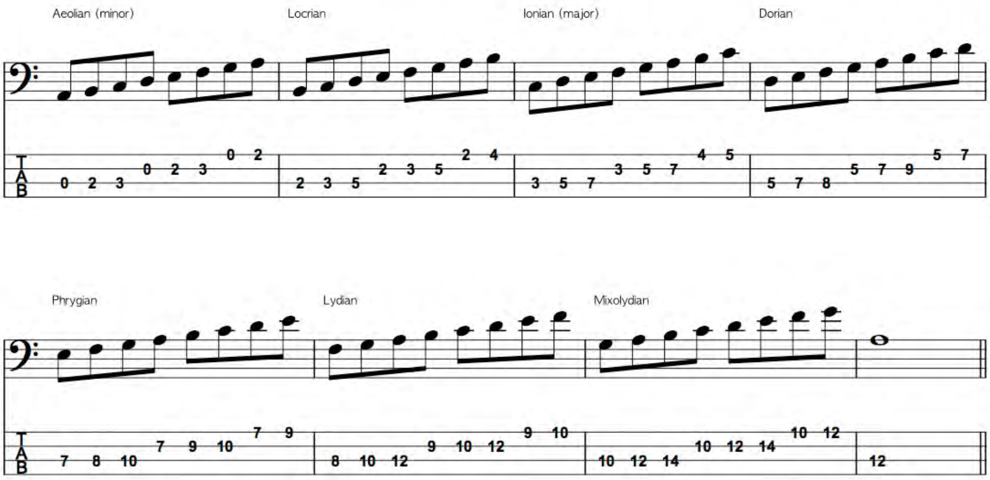
We'll start off this month by learning the modes of the major scale. This is probably familiar territory for many of you, and in fact if you've worked through my previous columns you'll already be quite familiar with the minor scale, which is the 6th mode of the major scale.

I've included some different fingering patterns for the modes in the accompanying tab. Choose the fingering that works best for you. If your hands are smaller or not very flexible, it's probably a good idea to stick with patterns that only cover four frets while playing lower on the neck.

Example 1



Example 2



Example one takes you through the major scale's seven modes: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. Note that Ionian and Aeolian are what we commonly call the major and minor scales, respectively. All of these modes are built by using the same seven notes of one main scale, C major in this case: C, D, E, F, G, A, B. What makes them different is simply the degree on which they start and finish. Ionian (major) starts on C and ends at C, Dorian goes from D to D, Phrygian from E to E, and so on.

You'll notice that when you get to the 7th mode (Locrian) you'll naturally want to carry on and play a final C to end the cycle. Try playing through the example without doing this. By ending on B rather than C it feels like you've left things unfinished, doesn't it? The seventh degree of a scale naturally creates a feeling of tension that needs resolution by returning to the key's tonic. You'd better go ahead and play that final C so you don't spend the rest of your day feeling unsettled!

Example two takes us through the modes using the same notes as above, but this time we'll try starting on Aeolian and finishing with Mixolydian, which will give the example a minor tonality rather than major. Finishing the pattern with an A in the final bar further reinforces the minor tonality, and

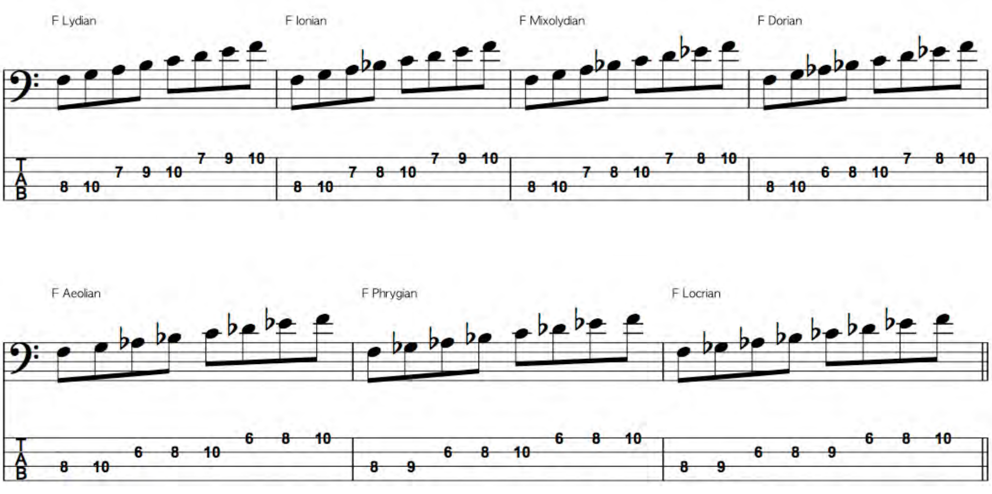
Extending your tone life

like the C in the last bar of the previous example, gives a feeling of resolution and finality.

In *example three* we'll keep the tonic (F) the same throughout the exercise, starting with F Lydian and flattening one note per measure until we finally arrive at F Locrian. This exercise will help you become familiar with each mode and the differences and similarities between them.

By using the modes you can get a lot of musical mileage out of a single scale, simply by changing the degree that you start the scale on. Next month we'll take a look at another scale and the modes that can be created from it.

Example 3



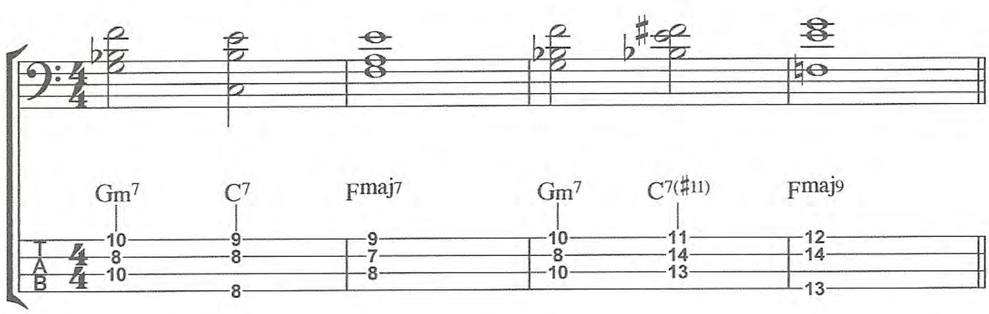
ROB STATHAM

PROF STATHAM REVEALS THE SECRETS OF TOP-DOWN HARMONY. LISTEN UP

We've looked at possible chord voicings on the bass in a previous column, and so I thought we might revisit the topic, introducing some new shapes and focusing on the aspect of voice leading. Simply put, voice leading entails thinking of the harmony from the top down, which is somewhat counterintuitive idea for bass players, used as we are to thinking of the harmony from the bottom up. To this end, we will look at some chord changes from the perspective of how the top note of the voicing moves or doesn't move, and consider how this might provide various options and suggest possible chord voicings.

In *example one*, I have notated a II-V-I chord change in the key of F in two ways; the first two bars using conventional seventh chord shapes with the root, third and seventh, and the second two bars using alternatives that are interesting from a couple of perspectives. Note that the second two bars start in the same way, with a G minor 7 chord consisting of root, minor third and minor seventh, but the C7 now has the sharp 11 (F#) on top, and also includes the third and seventh, thus leaving out the root note. The F major 7 in the last bar now has the ninth on top and also consists of the root and major seventh, this time leaving out the major third.

Example 1

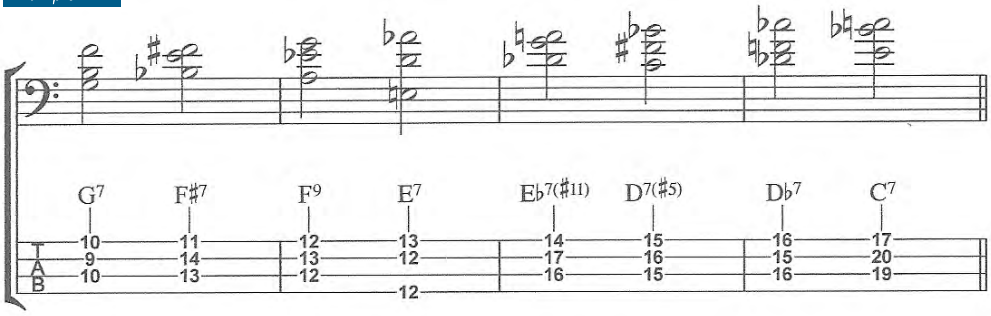


Firstly, this illustrates how it is possible to omit certain notes, even basic tonal components such as the root and the third, and still – in the right context – convey the harmonic movement. If you play the entire four bars you can hear that the third and fourth bar are essentially just an alternative voicing to the first two bars, with the II-V-I still apparent despite the omitted tones.

You can also hear that the top note of each chord in the third and fourth bars together constitute a chromatic ascending line, F-F#-G. This is especially effective as the harmony is essentially moving downwards through the cycle of fourths, and so our top line now provides an element of motion contrary to the direction of the harmony. Thus, our voice leading consideration adds an element of interest and a degree of harmonic tension, which makes for an effective contrast to the more conventionally voiced first two bars.

I've taken this idea a step further in *example two*, which consists of seventh chords descending in semitones whilst the top note ascends in semitones. Now, the root note is absent for most of the chords, so you might try recording a descending chromatic line from G, and then play these chord voicings over it in order to fully appreciate the contrary motion of the exercise. As you can see, it becomes necessary to play the appropriate upper extension of each chord in order to maintain the ascending line in semitones, and so, besides thirds, sevenths, and roots, we have the ninth on top on the F7, the sharp 11 on the Eb7 and the sharp five on the D7.

Example 2



Another goal which good voice leading can help us to achieve is to keep the same note on the top of each chord voicing, essentially a pedal tone, even as the harmony moves underneath it. *Example three* illustrates this with the note Ab, or G#, on the top of each chord voicing as the chords change around it. (I have called the top note either Ab or G# depending on the chord, but it's the same note, of course: the 13th fret on the G string, as the tab makes clear.)

As you can see, this one note serves as the ninth on the Gb chord; the minor third on the F chord; the seventh on both the A and Bb chords, first major seventh and then minor seventh; the root on the Ab chord, a simple triad inversion; the sixth on the B minor chord; the third on the E major chord;

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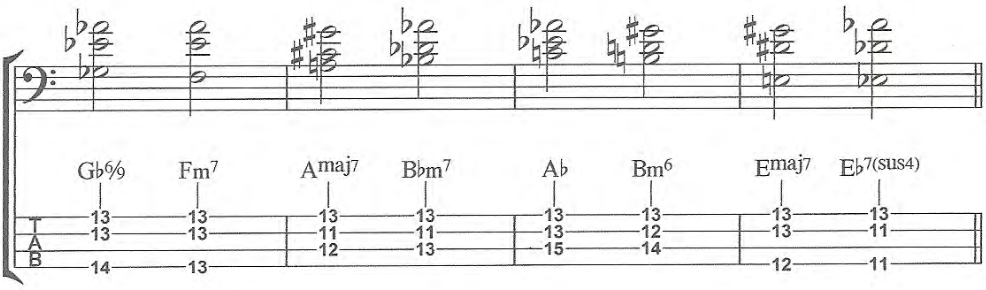
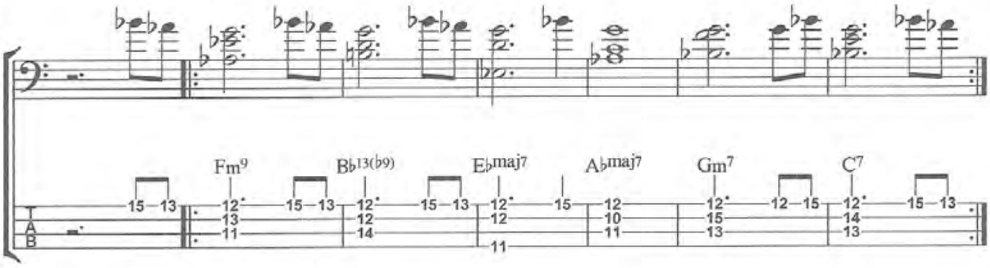
Example 3



Example 4



and, finally, the suspended fourth on the Eb sus chord. It is always worth checking to see, when thinking how to voice a chordal passage, if there is a common tone between all the chords that might enable you to use this idea, creating the voicings around a constant top note for each chord.

As you practise some of these ideas – and investigate your own – you will see how enhancing your chordal vocabulary in this way and developing control over voice leading considerations will equip you with chord melody possibilities from a top line and chord changes. The final example demonstrates how we might approach this on a short, six-bar melody, which uses a few repeated notes as the chords change around it. There is a simple motif – Bb-Ab-G – that with some variations and omissions links the chord changes, which are all essentially within the key centre of Eb major, II-V-I-IV-III-VI.

You will notice that the note G is the top note of all the chord voicings, thus a similar concept to the third example. It is the ninth on the first chord, F minor 7, and then becomes the 13th on the second chord, Bb13 b9. You may also notice that this chord, as I have voiced it, is actually a G major triad, 1st inversion, but in the particular context in which it occurs, it suggests the Bb chord, functioning as the flatted ninth, major third and thirteenth, lacking just the minor seventh and root to fully spell the chord. This is a good example of how, despite the omission of some notes, fairly sophisticated harmony can be expressed with just three notes when used in the right context. Our pedal G then becomes the major third on the Eb chord; the major seventh on the Ab chord; the root on the G minor 7 chord; and the fifth on the C7. Experiment with your own voice leading ideas through chord changes, maybe thinking about creating an ascending or descending line, or keeping the top note the same where possible. In so doing you will discover more chordal possibilities and will begin to feel less at the mercy of the changes, being able instead to impose your own direction of flow. Chord melody possibilities will start to present themselves too – a topic for a future column.

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MUSIC EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

FRANC O'SHEA

ADVANCED THEORY JEDI MASTER FRANC IS HERE TO MAKE YOUR SOLOING THEORY SOLID

In this month's column I will be continuing my series on soloing, and in particular on jazz chord progressions, by not only looking at some foundational scales to use on a standard Imaj7-VI7(b9)-IImin7-V7(b9) progression, but also how to mix scales and arpeggios as applied to this sequence.

It is worth noting that if you want to play contemporary jazz, you can't just sidestep the genre's rich history by avoiding playing jazz standards and then expect to play, for example, authentic jazz fusion, which is why I'll be examining some older types of progressions.

In last month's column I talked about the importance of building your own musical vocabulary rather than just copying others. I highlighted the fact that there is a difference between influence and imitation. Music is a language, and to speak that language at an advanced level – for example, gaining the ability to improvise over a jazz sequence – you need to know not only how that language sounds, but also how it works. Could you imagine if when you talked all you did was quote snippets of what others have said? Unfortunately when it comes to music, there are a lot of players who are looking for shortcuts. The easy way forward is to copy others, but I don't advise it.

If you really want to learn how to play jazz, you need to understand how it works theoretically, which means studying all the so-called 'boring' stuff. The good news is that if you do it this way you will save yourself time in the end, because you will actually understand what you are doing – and you will be able to develop your own original voice. In an interview with *BGM* writer Steve Rosen in 1978, Jaco Pastorius stated "Everyone is always trying to think too musically. You've got to get the basic mathematics down and then you can go anywhere from there."

Even though the exercises presented here are not music as such, they will provide you with the theoretical foundation with which you will eventually create music. In the coming months, once this foundation has been established, I will show you how to use this knowledge to do so.

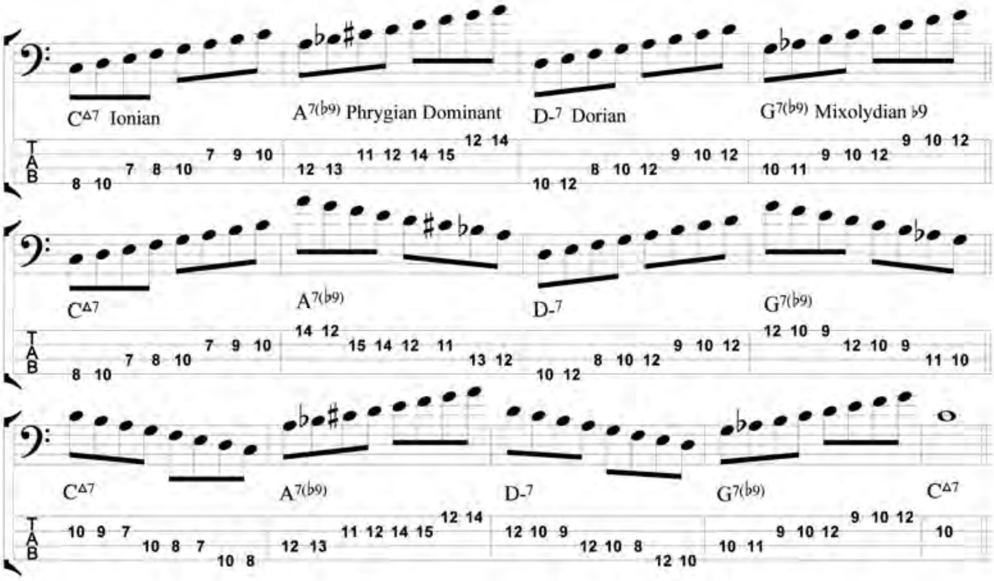
I thoroughly recommend that you sing the exercises to yourself once you have them under your fingers. By singing the exercises, you will be absorbing their tonal colours into your brain: after all, music is sound vibration, a phenomenon that, as bassists, we know well. In fact, the best solos often occur when the musician is singing along with what they are playing, as this tends to force you to be more musical and in turn to sing through your instrument. It doesn't matter if you don't have a great voice: the instrument is your voice.

Example one demonstrates foundational scales that work with this standard Imaj7-VI7(b9)-IImin7-V7(b9) jazz sequence. The key of C major is used for convenience, but as usual you should apply these concepts to all keys. Although there are other scales that will work with these chords, including those that provide more tension on the dominant chords, I call those presented here 'foundational' since they remain close to the original key. The Ionian mode (major scale) is used for chord Imaj7, but jazz players also often use the Lydian mode (1 2 3 #4 5 6 7) on major 7th chords, so experiment with both.

In the second bar we see that, on the sixth degree of the key, a Phrygian dominant scale is used, which is the fifth mode of the harmonic minor scale. The 7th chord usually associated with the sixth degree of a major key is a min7, or if you add the ninth, a min9, but an A7b9 chord appears here instead. The function of this chord is to create tension, which subsequently resolves in the next bar. The major third, C#, is a semitone below the root of the next chord, Dmin7, and the flatted ninth, Bb, is a semitone above the fifth of the Dmin7, which is the note A.

The mode normally associated with the sixth degree is the Aeolian mode (1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7). Since our A7b9 chord contains both a major third and a flatted ninth (the same as a flatted second, but an octave higher), we need to raise the third and lower the second degrees of the Aeolian mode, thus creating a Phrygian dominant (1 b2 3 4 5 b6 b7). No further alterations are required for the scale to work with the chord, since both the perfect fifth and the minor seventh intervals are already contained within the formula.

Example 1



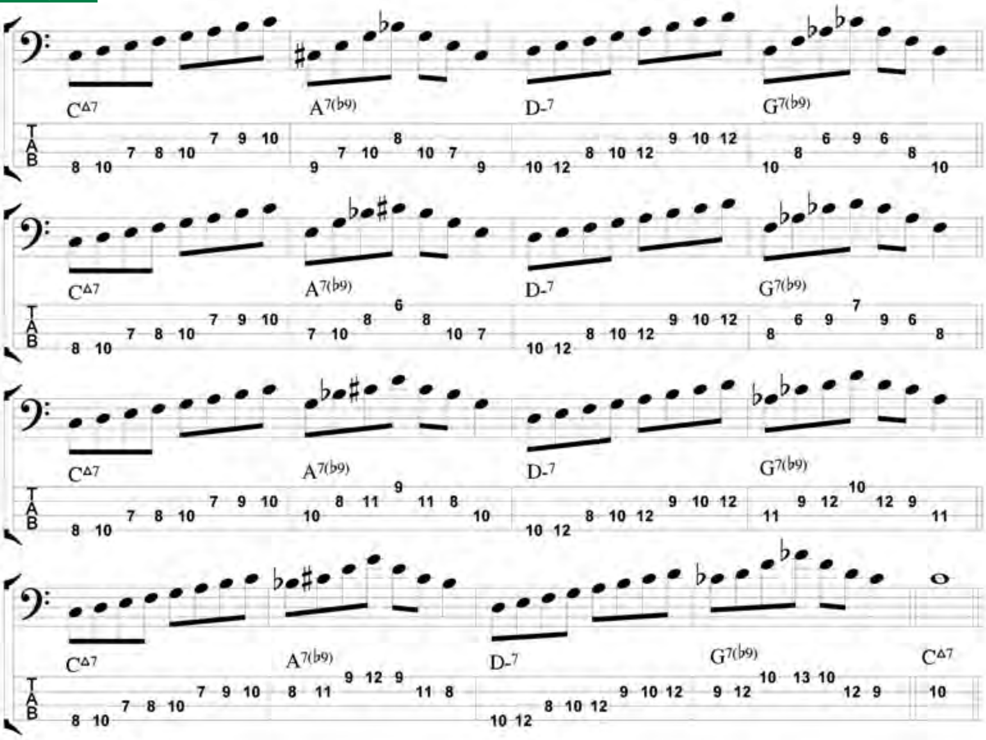
Extending your tone life

For the third bar, the usual Dorian mode (1 2 b3 4 5 6 b7) is employed for chord IImin7 in the key. Chord V appears as a dominant 7 with a flatted ninth in bar four. The flatted ninth adds extra tension to the V to I perfect cadence, as the Ab of the G7b9 moves down a semitone to resolve at the fifth, G, of the Cmaj7 chord in the fifth bar. The mode usually associated with the fifth degree of the major scale is Mixolydian. By flatting its second degree we create a Mixolydian b2 scale (1 b2 3 4 5 6 b7), which is the fifth mode of the harmonic major scale. The exercise then continues using the same scales but alternates between ascending and descending versions to help you to become even more familiar with their formulas.

Both *example two* and *example three* combine the scales from *example one* with the arpeggios used in the examples in my last column. This is achieved by alternating scales and arpeggios from bar to bar. The arpeggios relate to the chords, with chords Imaj7 and IImin7 appearing in root position and all three inversions, and diminished 7 substitutes replacing the full 7b9 chords. In fact, you will notice that the diminished 7 chords are exactly the same as the 7b9 chords, only with the root note absent.

The point of the *examples two* and *three* is for you to be able to alternate between scales and chords, and also to see what some of the options are for other notes between chord tones to aid you in the construction of melodic lines. By using the exercises contained in last month's column in conjunction with this month's exercises, you will gain some great insights into how you can make smooth melodic connections between one chord and another.

Example 2



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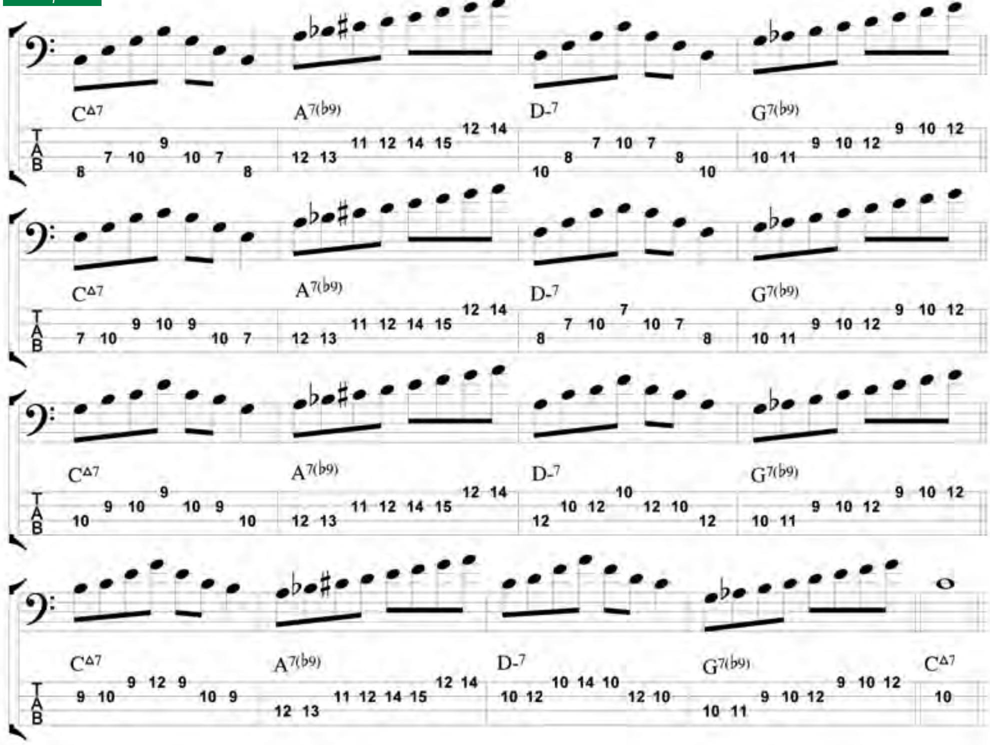


Next month I'll be looking at even more options that will help to further expand your musical vocabulary with regard to soloing on standard jazz changes. Until then…

PHIL MANN

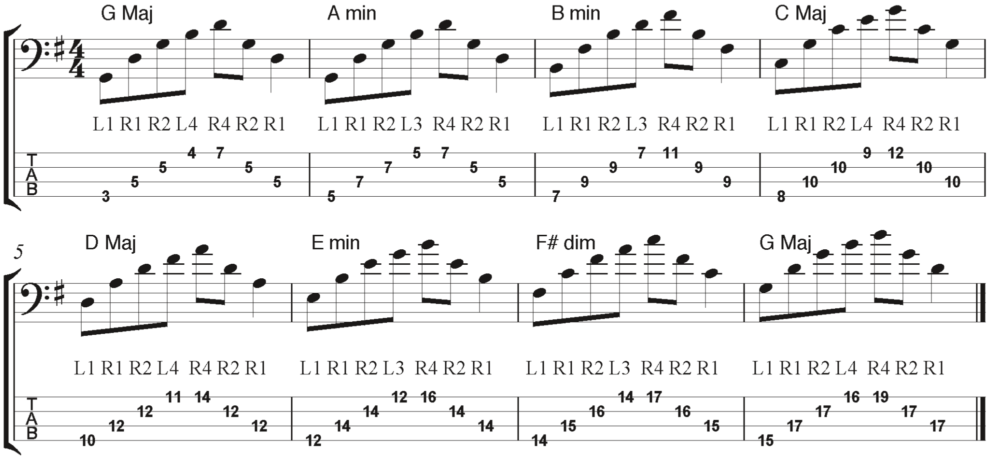
OUR MAN MANN GETS INTO THE THORNY AREA OF CADENCES FOR BASS

Over the last couple of issues, we've been developing our functional use of the tapping technique by examining and executing the triads that exist within the major scale. Hopefully by now you should all be familiar with the order in which these triads appear, and ideally you'll be able to use the information in any performance environment. Thus far we've harmonised the G major scale, performing the triads in various ways using both left and right hands simultaneously on the fretboard.

These exercises use the following fingering: L (left hand), R (right hand), 1 (index finger), 2 (middle finger), 3 (ring finger), and 4 (little finger).

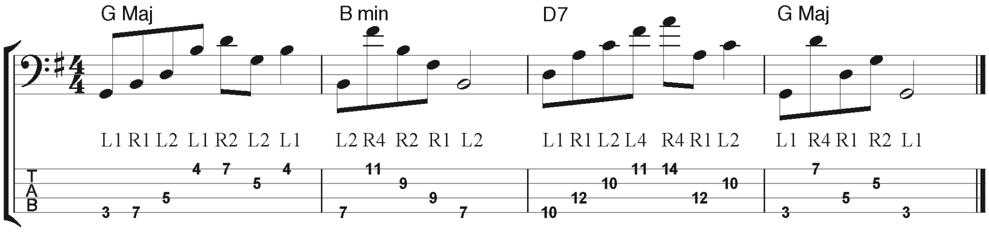
Most harmony and theory is useless unless you apply it. It's important to take new information, concepts and techniques and apply them to practical environments. If you don't, skills can be lost as time passes: 'If you don't use it, you lose it' and all that!

Example 1



This month, we will focus our attention on applying the melodic skills that we have acquired over the last few issues to some common day-to-day chord progressions. The following example is based upon a I-IIImin-V7-I chord progression in the key of G major. This example will include, for the first time in our studies together, a dominant 7th chord. Its presence will enable me to introduce a new theoretical aspect in the next few paragraphs.

Example 2

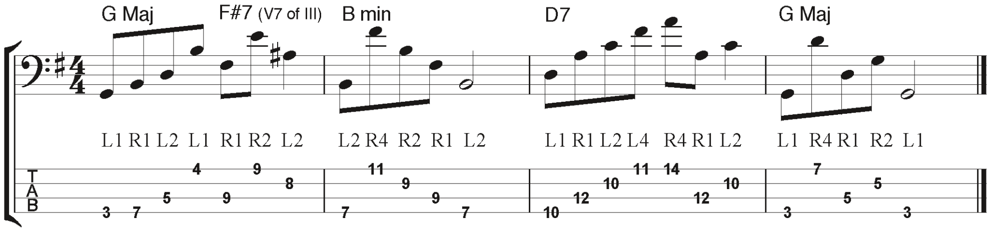


Cadences shape so much of what we do as players: their existence describes the relationship that exists between two chords that create a sense of resolution. One cadence that we regularly come into contact with is the 'perfect' cadence. Also known as an authentic cadence, this is specifically identified as the movement between the V7-I chords (dominant 7th and tonic).

The principles that are found within perfect cadences can also be used to develop additional harmonic information. The specific tool that we will investigate today is referred to as 'secondary dominants'.

Example three takes the same I-IIImin-V7-I progress that we saw in example two. This time, however, a secondary dominant has been introduced (V7 of IIImin) on the third beat of bar one. In short, a dominant chord is placed a fifth above the target chord. In doing so, the additional dominant chord creates supplementary motion that 'pulls' the progression towards the IIImin, in much the same way that a V7 pulls towards the tonic in a perfect cadence.

Example 3



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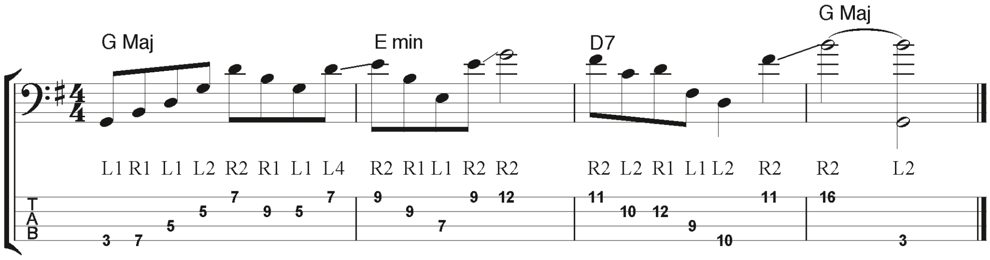
Example 4

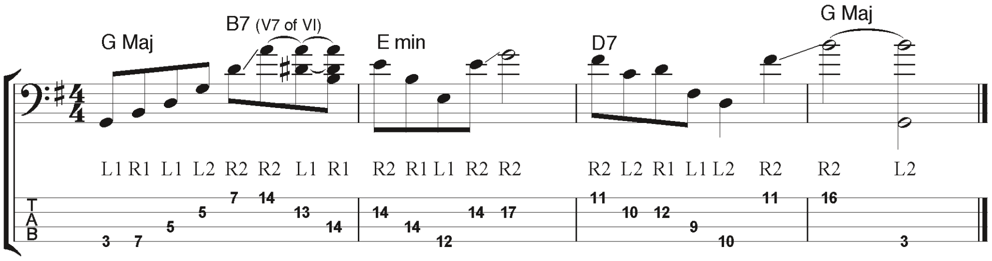
The melodic information in example four is produced over a I-VImin-V7-I chord progression.



To help encourage movement within this standard chord progression, *example five* once again introduces a secondary dominant before the VImin chord (V7 of VI).

Example 5

You can put a V7 a fifth above most chords to aid motion in a chord progression. These 'man-made' secondary dominants are referred to as 'non-functional', as they are not the naturally occurring V7 chord in a key centre. The V7 chords that are diatonic are referred to as 'functional'.



Why not investigate some other chord progressions and then experiment with adding some secondary dominants to liven them up? Until next time, practise hard!

DAVID ETHERIDGE

DAVID ETHERIDGE LOOKS AT MORE OF THE BASS ACCESSORIES YOU'LL NEED TO BE AN UPRIGHT MAESTRO

Looking at the world of double bass accessories, you'll quickly find that there's a bewildering range of items to consider, so let's look at some of the most useful ones.

A bass stool is essential if you prefer to sit down while playing. You could get a basic kitchen or barstool, of course: these can be very cheap, with many players being perfectly happy with them. For concert and gig use, however, you may want to look at something like the ones shown here, with backrest, feet rests and all mod cons.

The Double Trolley does exactly what its name says, doubling as both a trolley and a playing stool. It's a very ingenious solution and saves a lot of space. There are various other accessories for transporting basses, from clip-on trolleys to bass wheels that fit into the endpin socket and you wheel along like a monocycle. All of these can be useful in saving your back over long distances.

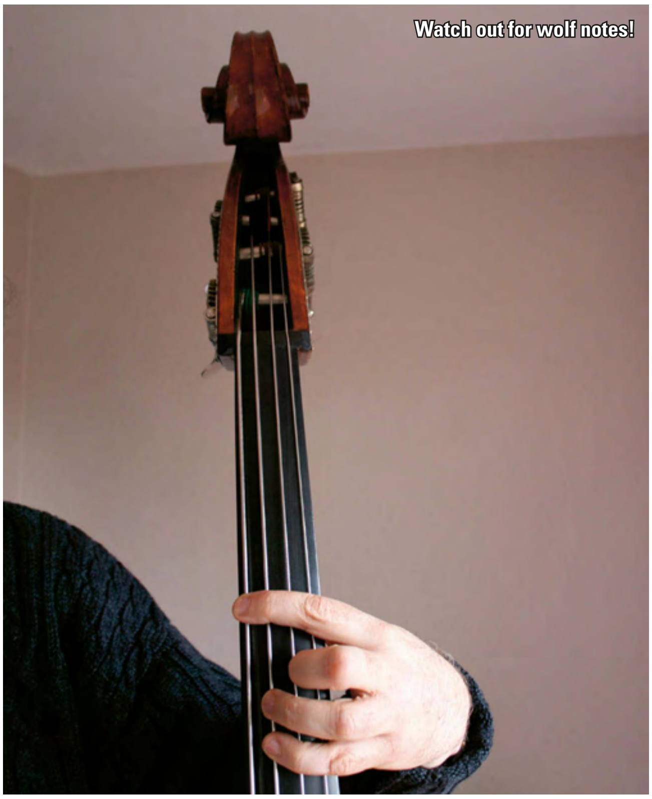
If you use a bow, a quiver is essential. When I got mine I quickly wondered how I had managed without one: it lets you change very quickly from bowing to plucking (arco to pizz) and avoids that noisy moment where your bow clatters onto the floor, having slipped from its resting place between the feet of the bridge.

Mutes are essential for added textures in orchestral playing. The traditional three-pronged ebony versions can be slow to attach and remove from the bridge in classical work, so get one of those natty sliding rubber mutes that fit onto the strings below the bridge and can be slid in and out of position easily.

Talking of bridges, some players fit adjustable ones. These comprise knurled adjusters on the feet to let you raise or lower the height of the string action without taking the bridge off or replacing it entirely: this is incredibly useful when changing string sizes. Some adjustable bridges have self-leveling feet that give a greater contact area with the belly of the bass and produce more tone as a result.

It's a well-known fact in bass circles that some notes can produce 'wolf notes'. G# on the E string can be a common culprit, although one of my student's basses produces a fearful racket from an open A string. This can be caused by overtones produced by the string resonance from the length of the string below the bridge, which may clash with the note from the main part. Wolf note eliminators are useful little weights that screw or clip onto the offending string and solve the problem. You'll almost certainly need only one on your instrument.

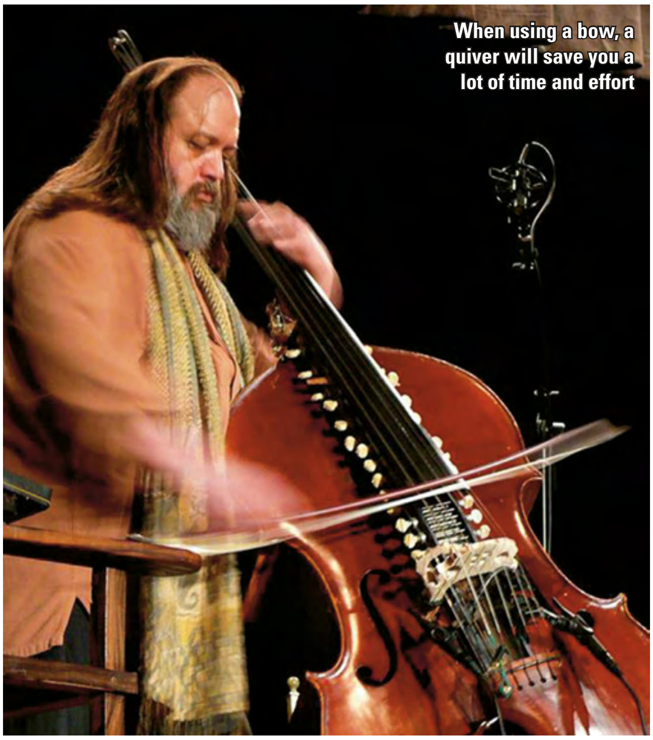
Extending your tone life



Watch out for wolf notes!

Muting strings is essential

"IF YOU USE A BOW, A QUIVER IS ESSENTIAL. WHEN I GOT MINE I QUICKLY WONDERED HOW I HAD MANAGED WITHOUT ONE; IT LETS YOU CHANGE VERY QUICKLY FROM BOWING TO PLUCKING (ARCO TO PIZZ) AND AVOIDS THAT NOISY MOMENT WHERE YOUR BOW CLATTERS ONTO THE FLOOR, HAVING SLIPPED FROM ITS RESTING PLACE BETWEEN THE FEET OF THE BRIDGE"



When using a bow, a quiver will save you a lot of time and effort

Rosins can be bewildering: one manufacturer makes no fewer than six grades, all designed with different temperatures in mind and thus leading to the 'runny glue' syndrome on hot days when you use the wrong type. Experience is the best way of finding out which suits you, and fellow bassists will be able to advise on which ones they prefer.

Next month we'll return to musical exercises to rev up your playing.

KEVIN SANDERS

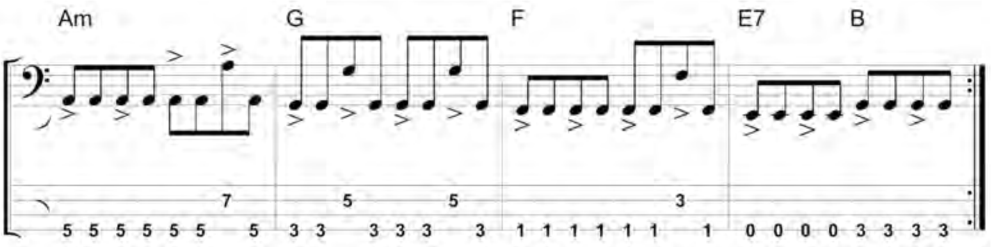
TONE KING KEV INVESTIGATES THE CAREER OF THE PHENOMENAL LARRY GRAHAM

The immortal question: did Larry Graham invent slap bass? It's a contentious point, but most bass players seem to agree that he probably did. Graham is best known, of course, as the bass player with one of the coolest bands of the 1970s, Sly And The Family Stone. For those not familiar with this band, and there can't be many, I suggest you listen to 'Family Affair' or 'Dance To The Music' to see what all the fuss is about – after you've read this, of course!

As well as being a great bass player, Graham is a singer: his rich baritone is almost as much a trademark as his thumping bass lines. After his six-year gig with Sly, Graham formed Graham Central Station in 1973. The new band featured the cream of musicians from the Oakland, California area and was often accompanied by the awesome Tower Of Power horn section, themselves from the same manor. As well as GCS, Graham has enjoyed a long friendship with Minneapolis's finest, Prince: the

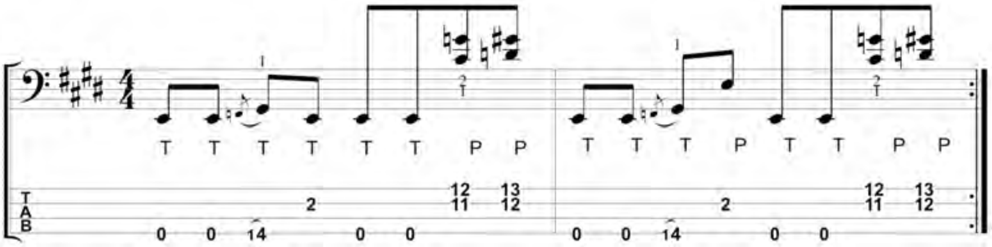
Example 1

Here's a typical Graham-style palm-muted bass-line plucked with the thumb. The notes not accented are muted slightly using left hand technique.



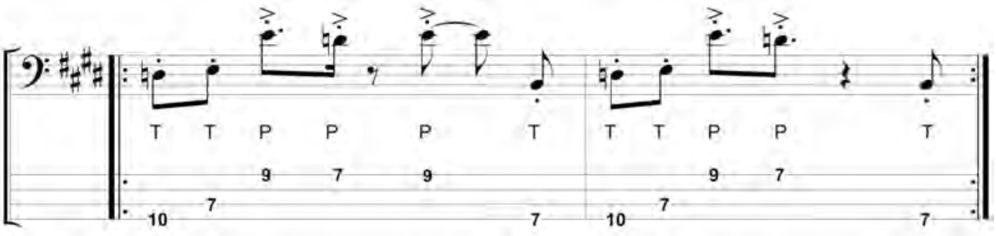
Example 2

Here are a couple of classic GCS-style slap bass grooves. Play the double stops in example three by strumming upwards with the first finger.



Example 3

Graham plays this kind of groove as written, but you may find it easier to play the first two notes on the A string.



GEAR

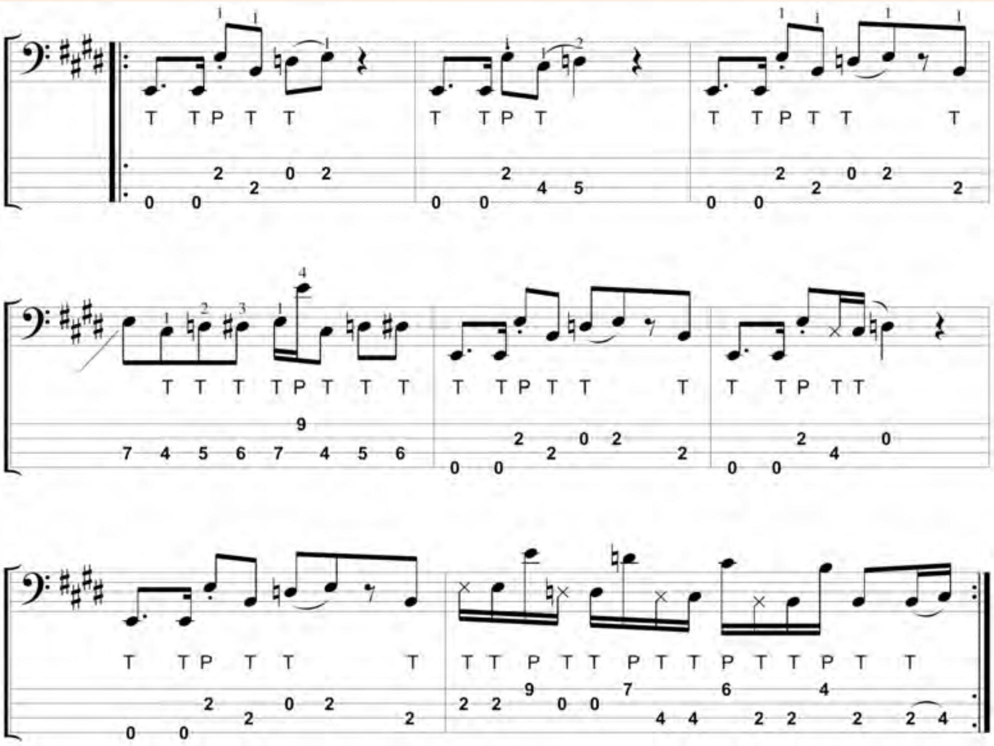
Form the first 10 years of his career, Graham played customised Fender Jazz basses, but since then he has used basses made by Japanese luthiers Moon. These Fender-esque instruments feature the best design points of both Jazz and Stingray basses, with the addition – for Graham's basses at least – of built-in wireless and DI functions. Graham has two Moon basses: a four-string he calls 'Sunshine' and a five-string, 'Moonshine', which he only ever uses for recording. Both are all white with gold hardware.

For amplification, Graham was a long-time user of Acoustic 360 rigs, although during his time with Sly he'd often use a 2x15 Sunn stack. He now uses Warwick when in Europe, and there's even rumour of a Warwick signature bass in the pipeline. Although he prefers a clean bass sound, his pedalboard is often used for solo: he has a Boss distortion, delay, auto wah and volume pedal. Strings are GHS Boomers 40s to 90s.

Extending your tone life

Example 4

Now try this Larry Graham style slap solo that uses some of the great mans favourite slap chops.



LARRY GRAHAM'S STYLE

Whether or not Graham invented slap is a moot point. The important thing is that he was one of the first players to realise the potential of this style of playing. Most of Graham's slap licks are in the key of E and based around octaves, but it's testament to the man that within these narrow parameters he's found a lifetime's supply of funky grooves.

Looking at the way he plays in more detail, you can see that he has a very relaxed right hand and usually slaps a little further back than many of the players who came after him. On his old Jazz basses, that would mean slapping the strings between the front pickup and the end of the neck. He always pops the G and D with his index finger, with which he also strums upwards when playing his favourite double stops on the D and G strings.

His left hand technique is also unique, with his thumb permanently over the top of the neck, fretting the E string when required. This sounds awkward, but it obviously works for him and looks effortless. When not slapping (which isn't that often), Graham will usually pluck with his thumb and first finger, his palm resting right back against the bridge in the manner of someone picking an acoustic guitar. Only rarely does he pluck the strings in what might be called the 'normal' way.

ESSENTIAL TRACKS

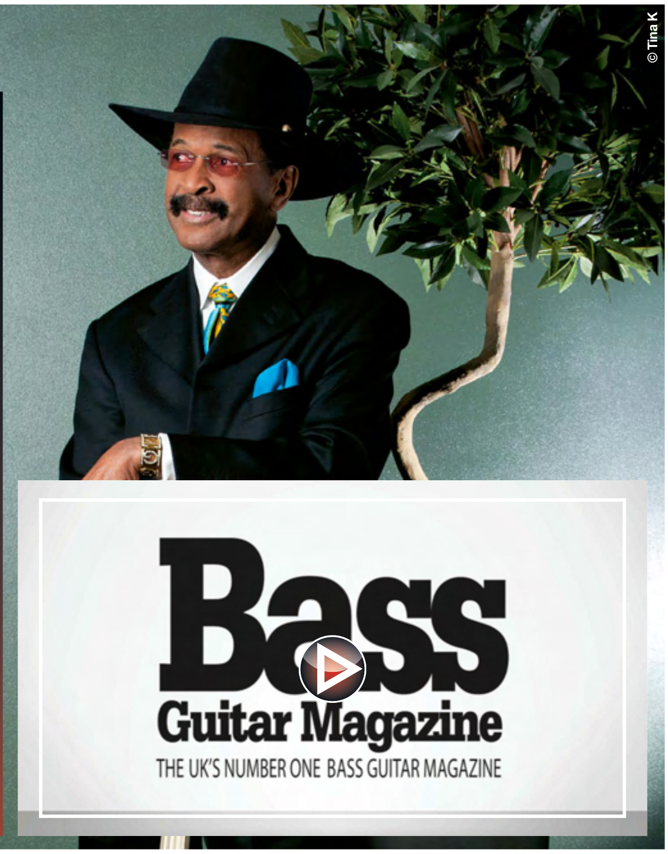
'Dance To The Music', *Dance To The Music*, Sly And The Family Stone
The first time that slap bass was heard on a record? Larry Graham puts down the marker.

'Sing A Simple Song', *Stand!*, Sly And The Family Stone
Great fingerstyle playing by Graham on this dance groove, with its trippy Sound Of Music vignette.

'Throw-N-Down The Funk', *Raise Up*, Graham Central Station
Righteous! What a groove on this instrumental track. Recorded at Paisley Park Studio and also featuring the man formerly known as the 'man formerly known as Prince'.

'Hair', *Release Yourself*, Graham Central Station
Great bass groove on this song covered many years later by TM Stevens.

'The Jam', *Ain't No Bout Adoubt It*, Graham Central Station
A live favourite: try to find the version with Marcus Miller guesting.



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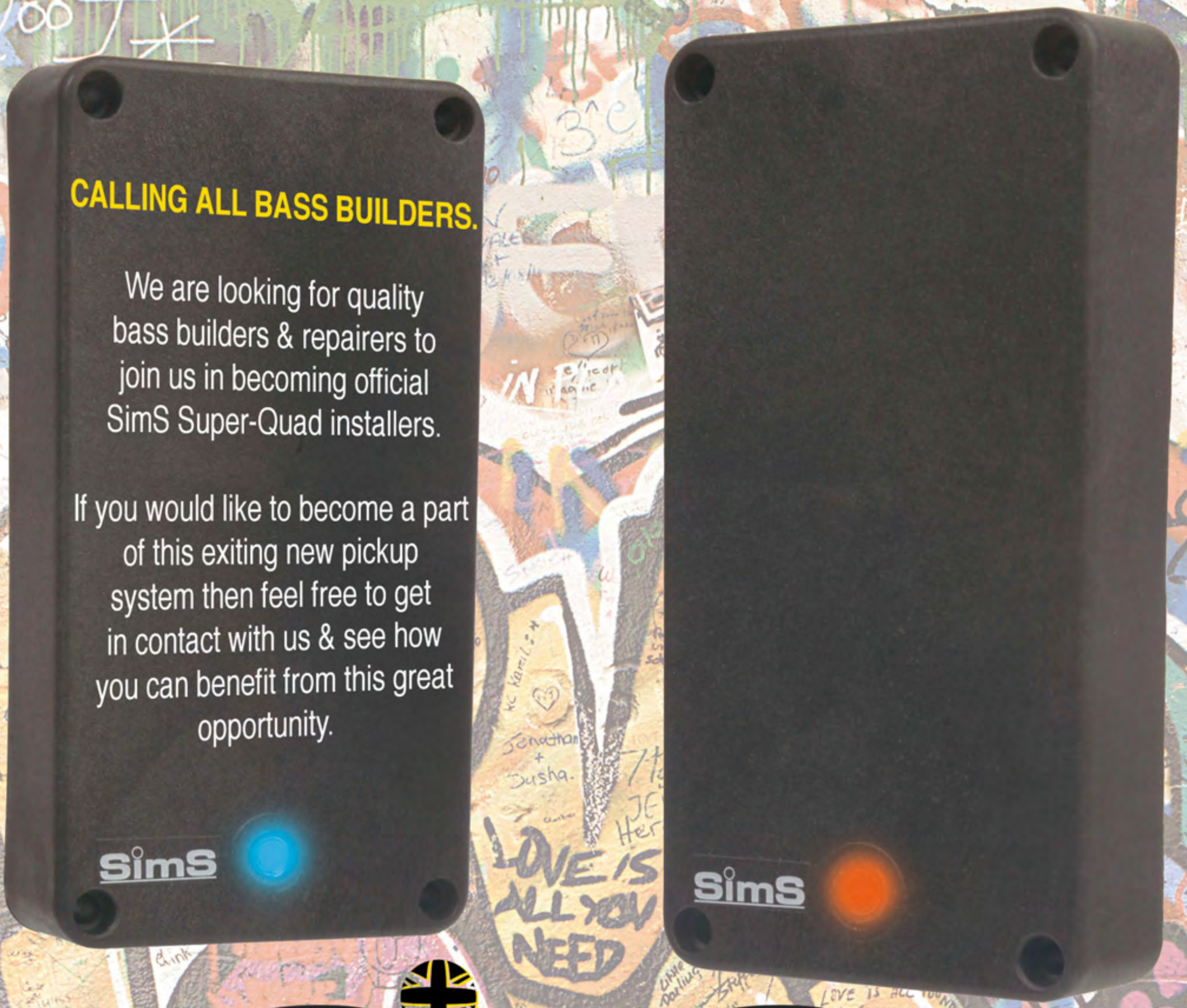

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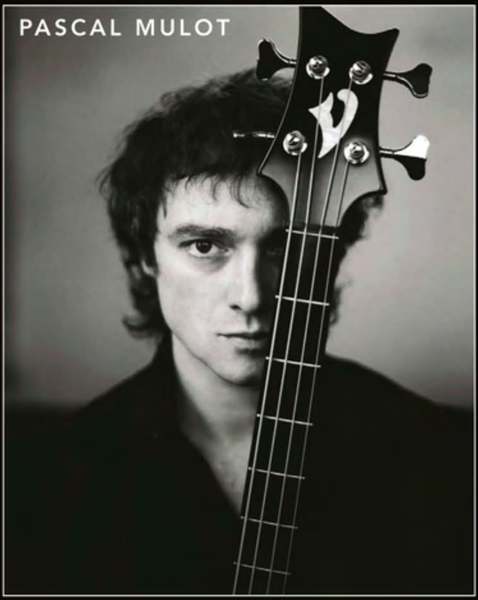
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